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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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India shines as Men's, Women's teams win Kho Kho World Cup

Indian women's team after winning the Kho Kho World Cup over Nepal, in New Delhi, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

It was a double delight for India in the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup. The Indian women's team clinched the title with a dominant 78-40 win over Nepal, followed by the men's team, who also secured a comprehensive victory against the same country.

The inaugural edition of the Kho Kho World Cup was held from January 13 to 19 at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in India, with 39 teams participating across both men's and women's categories. The men's competition featured 20 teams divided into four groups, while the women's segment had 19 teams placed into four sections.

In a thrilling encounter, India's women team showcased a masterclass of speed, strategy, and skill, dominating the match from the outset. The hosts made a brisk start in Turn 1, with the Indian attackers capitalising on their chances. The Nepalese team fell short as they were out by touches on seven occasions, allowing India to collect 14 points right away.

Captain Priyanka Ingle led her team with remarkable precision, securing multiple touch points as India surged ahead to 34 points, preventing Nepal from gaining a foothold. Although Nepal's Manmati Dhami managed to secure a touch on Vaishnavi Pawar, and B Samjhana eliminated Ingle, BK Chaithra propelled India into the Dream Run in Turn 2.However, Nepal soon reclaimed some momentum, with Dipa completing an ALL OUT, narrowing the deficit to 11 points by halftime. The score stood at 34-23, leaving Nepal with hope for a comeback.

But India resumed their dominance in Turn 3, denying the Nepalese defenders any chance to settle. Despite BK Dipa's efforts for Nepal, India continued to pull ahead. Chaithra took centre stage during the Dream Run in Turn 4, amassing a total of 78 points within an impressive 5 minutes and 14 seconds.

India's path to the final included commanding victories over South Korea, Iran, and Malaysia in the group stages, followed by a decisive win against Bangladesh in the quarter-finals and a masterful performance against South Africa in the semis. *—PTI*

Gaza ceasefire begins as Hamas releases 3 Israelis

Israel is expected to release around 90 Palestinian prisoners

DEIR AL-BALAH, 19 JAN

Three Israeli hostages released from Gaza have been handed over to Israeli forces there in the first test of a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The three hostages are Romi Gonen, 24, kidnapped from the Nova music festival, and Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31, kidnapped from Kibbutz Kfar Aza.

Later on Sunday, Israel is expected to release around 90 Palestinian prisoners.

A gradual release of 33 captives over the next six weeks has been agreed on. In exchange, Israel will release almost 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and Palestinians from Gaza who have been detained.

The truce has sparked hope and trepidation. Many Israelis fear that the three-phase deal could collapse before all hostages return, and they worry who has died in captivity.

Relatives of people killed and abducted by Hamas gather in Tel Aviv, Israel on Sunday; Displaced Palestinians, return to Rafah, as a ceasefire went into effect, in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Sunday **PHOTOS: PTI**

Some 250 people were kidnapped during Hamas' 7 October, 2023, attack that triggered 15 months of war. Almost 100 hostages had remained in Gaza after the rest were released or their bodies recovered. The three hostages set to be released from Gaza were transferred to the Red Cross and were on their way toward Israeli forces, the Israeli military announced Sunday, hours after the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took hold.

Israeli media, carrying live footage showed the hostages walking between vehicles as their convoy moved through Gaza City, surrounded by a huge crowd, with many people holding up phones and filming. The vehicles were accompanied by armed men who wore green Hamas headbands and struggled to guard the cars from an unruly crowd that swelled into the thousands. Meanwhile, in Tel Aviv, thousands of people gathered to watch the news on large screens erupted in cheers. *—PTI*

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CENTRE TO HOLD TALKS

121 farmers end fast after Dallewal takes medical aid

CHANDIGARH, 19 JAN

A group of 121 farmers, who sat on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri protest site in solidarity with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, ended their indefinite strike on Sunday after the farmer leader took medical aid.

Dallewal, 70, who had refused any aid since he sat on a fast-unto-death on 26 November, agreed on Saturday to take medical aid after the Centre sent an invitation for talks on 14 February to discuss the farmers' demands.

With his health deteriorating and the government not agreeing to their demands, a group of 111 farmers had joined Dallewal's fast-unto-death on 15 January, and sat on the Haryana side of the border near Khanauri. On 17 January, 10 more farmers from Haryana, joined them.

Jagjit Singh Dallewal **PHOTO: PTI**

The farmers ended their fast by sipping juice in the presence of Deputy Inspector General of Police Mandeep Singh Sidhu and Patiala Senior Superintendent of Police Nanak Singh. *—PTI*

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Manu Bhaker's grandmom, uncle killed in accident

BHIWANI, 19 JAN

Paris Olympic medallist shooter Manu Bhaker's grandmother and maternal uncle died in a road accident here on Sunday, police said. The accident occurred on Mahendragarh bypass road in Charkhi Dadri area when a car hit their scooty, officials said. The two died on the spot and the car driver fled from the spot after the accident, Assistant Sub-Inspector Suresh Kumar said. He said that the victims have been identified as Bhaker's grandmother Savitri Devi, 70, and maternal uncle Yudhveer, 50, who worked as a driver in Haryana roadways. Kumar said the bodies have been sent for post-mortem and efforts are underway to nab the car driver. *—PTI*

BLAST AT MAHA KUMBH

Firefighters try to douse a fire that broke out due to a cylinder blast in tents during Maha Kumbh, at Sangam in Prayagraj, on Sunday. No casualty was reported in the incident **PHOTO: PTI** ***>>>More on Page 4***

FIR against RaGa for 'fighting Indian state' remark

GUWAHATI, 19 JANUARY

Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, has landed in trouble over his recent remarks, where he stated that "the BJP and RSS have captured every single institution, and we are now fighting the BJP, the RSS, and the Indian State itself".

An FIR has been registered against him at the Pan Bazar Police Station in Guwahati.

Rahul Gandhi made the statement on January 15, 2025, during the inauguration of the Congress Party's new headquarter at Kotla Road in Delhi. The FIR was registered under section 152 and 197(1)d of the BNS for "acts endangering sovereignty unity and integrity of India," a cognizable and non-bailable office.

The complainant, Monjit Chetia, alleged that Gandhi's statement crossed the limits of permissible free speech and posed a serious threat to public order and national security.

Chetia claimed that Gandhi's words were an attempt to delegitimize the authority of the State, creating a dangerous narrative that could provoke unrest and separatist sentiments. *—ANI*

BANGLADESHI HELD FOR KNIFE ATTACK ON SAIF

MUMBAI, 19 JAN

Mumbai police on Sunday said a 30-year-old Bangladeshi national has been arrested for allegedly stabbing actor Saif Ali Khan at his residence in Mumbai.

Preliminary investigations suggested that the man was unaware that he had entered a Bollywood star's house and his intention was theft, a senior police official said. He said the attacker was nabbed at Hiranandani Estate on Ghodbandar Road in neighbouring Thane district.

The official said the man had changed his name, Shariful Islam Shehzad Mohammad Rohilla Amin Fakir, to Vijay Das. He said the accused, who hails from Jhalokati in Bangladesh, had been living in Mumbai for more than five months, doing petty jobs under a housekeeping agency. The police have registered a case against the accused under sections 311 (robbery or dacoity with the intent to cause grievous hurt or death), 331(4) (house-breaking) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita and Passport Act, 1967, the official said. Sources said sleuths are trying to collect the documents the accused had used to enter India illegally. *—PTI*

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'STAY AWAY FROM MONKEYS'

Second case of Monkey fever reported in Chikkamagaluru

BELAGAVI, 19 JAN

Kysanur Forest Disease (KFD), also known locally as monkey fever, which claimed several lives last summer, has resurfaced this season, infecting two individuals in Chikkamagaluru district.

Dr Ashwatbabu, District Health and Family Welfare Officer, said that after a 26-year-old man from Kadabagere village in Chikkamagaluru taluk was diagnosed with the disease early last week, a second case was identified in a 47-year-old man from Melpal village near Balehonnuru, Narasimrajpur taluk, last Friday. The latter patient has been admitted to the government hospital in Koppa town, while the first patient is receiving treatment at Manipal Hospital. Both are recovering, he added.

Forest Department has also joined the campaign, advising farmers, animal herders, and those gathering firewood in the forest to stay away from any dead monkeys, wear long-sleeved clothing, apply repellents distributed to the public before entering the forest, and immediately inform the department about any dead monkeys. He also emphasized the importance of washing hands thoroughly after returning from the forest.

Uttara Kannada district was hit hard by the epidemic last summer, claiming around a dozen lives **PHOTO: X**

KFD spreads primarily among people living in forest areas, transmitted by mosquitoes that bite dead monkeys.

SK Kallollikar, a retired District Conservator of Forests, noted that KFD outbreaks typically occur during the summer months, from November to May, in regions with dense forests such as Belagavi, Uttara Kannada (Karwar), Chikkamagaluru, and Mysuru.

Uttara Kannada district was severely affected by the epidemic last summer, with about a dozen lives lost, mostly from Siddapur taluk, which is known for its thick forests.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundurao, after a high-level meeting on the fatalities, announced that no cure for KFD has been developed yet. *—Salar News*

Trump to swear in today; likely to visit India

WASHINGTON, 19 JAN

President-elect Donald Trump wants to travel to China after he takes office as part of his effort to deepen relations with Beijing. He has also talked to advisors about a visit to India, a media report said on Saturday.

Trump had during his election campaign threatened to impose additional tariffs on China.

"President-elect Donald Trump has told advisors he wants to travel to China after he takes office, according to people familiar with the discussions, seeking to deepen a relationship with Xi Jinping strained by the president-elect's threat to impose steeper tariffs on Chinese imports," The Wall Street Journal reported.

"Trump has also talked to advisers about a possible trip to India, according to people close to him," the financial daily said. According to familiar sources, preliminary talks were initiated when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Washington DC around Christmas last month.

Keeping to tradition, Trump on eve of his inauguration in a series of Washington events that celebrate his return to power and his "Make America Great Again" movement as he prepares to move back into the White House at a time of deep national political divisions.

Trump has planned to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery before addressing a rally downtown at Capital One Arena, home of Washington pro basketball and hockey teams. *—PTI*

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TIKTOK SHUTS DOWN AHEAD OF US BAN

HOUSTON, 19 JAN

TikTok's app effectively shut down in the US on Saturday, hours before a law banning the popular video-sharing platform was set to go into effect. "A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the US. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now," a message reads when American users open the app.

"We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned!" *—PTI*

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PHOTO: X

BMTC e-bus suffers brake failure, crashes into shops

BENGALURU, 19 JAN

At least three people sustained minor injuries, while several pedestrians had a narrow escape after a Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) electric bus suffered a brake failure and rammed into nearby shops in Nagadevanahalli on Sunday morning. According to BMTC, the incident occurred around 6.30am when the e-bus was en route from Shirke Circle to Nagarbhavi. Preliminary investigations suggest that the bus driver lost control of the vehicle. Eyewitnesses reported that several pedestrians standing near the shops narrowly escaped harm. *—Salar News*

City man arrested for attacking wife, mother-in-law

BENGALURU, 19 JAN

The Kumaraswamy Layout police have arrested a man for allegedly attacking his wife and mother-in-law with a machete following a domestic dispute. According to the police, the accused, identified as Asif, had been harassing his wife, Hina Kauser, which led her to leave him and move in with her mother, Parveen Taj, in Banashankari. The couple, who had been married for 10 years and have two children, had been facing marital discord. Asif reportedly suspected Hina of having an affair with a college friend. A complaint filed by Parveen Taj alleged that her daughter, who had taken up a job to support herself financially, had endured frequent assaults from Asif. She also claimed that Asif had previously attempted to strangle Hina. On 14 January, Asif attacked both Hina and her mother with a machete. Hina and her mother sustained injuries. *—Salar News*

ED trying to malign CM's name: Mahadevappa

MYSURU, 19 JAN

Social Welfare and District In-charge minister Dr HC Mahadevappa on Sunday said all 142 immovable properties – worth Rs 300 crore – attached the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) are not all linked to the money laundering case involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The minister said the ED's messages on social media platforms linking the CM with these properties were an attempt to malign Siddaramaiah's public image. Mahadevappa said the reputation of the CM and his family have been targeted ever since these allegations surfaced. He said the 14 alternative sites obtained by CM's family are legally valid. The minister said that the 142 sites the ED has attached are illegal properties acquired under the controversial 50:50 scheme, which is also part of the MUDA scam. *—Salar News*

DKS lauds K'taka for Vijay Hazare Trophy 2025 win

BELAGAVI, 19 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister, DK Shivakumar, has congratulated the Karnataka State Cricket Team for their triumph in the 2025 Vijay Hazare Trophy, following a 36-run victory against Vidarbha in the final held on Saturday at Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara. Karnataka set a formidable target of 348/6, highlighted by Smaran Ravichandran's century (101 off 92 balls) and strong contributions from Abhinav Manohar and Krishnan Shrijith. Vidarbha struggled in their chase, despite a valiant 110-run effort from Dhruv Shorey, ultimately finishing at 312 runs. Karnataka's bowlers, led by Vasuki Koushik, Prasidh Krishna, and Abhilash Shetty with three wickets each, proved pivotal in securing the title.*—ANI*

HM defends law and order, calls BJP claims baseless

State sees two bank heists in 2 days in M'luru & Bidar

BENGALURU, 19 JAN

In a strong response to allegations from BJP regarding a decline in law and order in Karnataka, Home Minister G Parameshwara declared the claims as "baseless". Addressing the media on Sunday, he stated, "The law-and-order situation in Karnataka is very good. Claims of robberies and murders occurring regularly are unfounded. Such incidents will not be tolerated."

Parameshwara's remarks came in the wake of an armed gang's brazen robbery at a cooperative bank in Mangaluru's Ullal region on Friday, where cash and gold worth crores were stolen. This incident marks the second significant bank heist in Karnataka within just two days. The absence of a security guard during the robbery raised concerns, but

G Parameshwara PHOTO: PTI

Parameshwara attributed the chaos to minor operational shortcomings, asserting, "It is incorrect to say that the law-and-order situation has collapsed." He also pledged to release data on crime incidents that transpired during the BJP's governance, implying that the party had conveniently forgotten its record.

- Congress Minister Priyank Kharge said that party will organise a public rally on 21 January to celebrate the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's election as party president

In addition to discussing security issues, Parameshwara provided updates on the centenary celebrations of the National Congress Session of 1924, chaired by Mahatma Gandhi, which was temporarily postponed owing to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's passing. The festivities, branded as the Gandhi Bharat programme, would now proceed, featuring the 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Constitution' rally with Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and party president Mallikarjun Kharge in attendance. Parameshwara stressed the Congress party's rich legacy, stating, "We have a history unmatched by any other party. Tomorrow, we will all be in Belagavi."

Meanwhile, Congress Minister Priyank Kharge said that the party will organise a public rally under the banner 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' on 21 January to celebrate the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's election as party president. The event had been originally scheduled earlier but was postponed in respect for former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who recently passed away. He said that the rally aims to convey a strong message to BJP government at the Centre. *—PTI*

People holding umbrellas commute amid unseasonal rains in Bengaluru on Sunday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

B'luru hit by unseasonal rains, IMD predicts more

BENGALURU, 19 JAN

Early morning rain caught many in Bengaluru off guard on Sunday, as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted continuous rainfall not only in the state capital but also across south interior Karnataka and the Malnad regions.

The Karnataka Natural Disaster Management Centre (KSNDMC) has also issued a rain alert via its official X handle, indicating "scattered moderate rain in the southern interior, coastal, and hilly districts of the state," while dry air is expected to prevail in the northern interior districts. The state is also likely to experience moderate to heavy fog and scattered showers.

Areas including MG Road, Jayanagar, Hebbal, Sultanpalya, RT Nagar, and RR Nagar saw light rain on Sunday. According to the IMD, this unexpected rainfall in Bengaluru is part of a broader weather pattern influenced by a cyclone forming off the eastern coast of Sri Lanka and in the southwest Bay of Bengal. This development has created a ripple effect throughout various districts in Karnataka, leading to cooler temperatures and rainfall.

The Bengaluru Meteorological Centre reported that light rain is anticipated over the next 48 hours, with temperatures expected to drop to around 27 degrees Celsius and 17 degrees Celsius on Sunday, and further to 26 degrees Celsius and 16 degrees Celsius by Monday. Additionally, the IMD has issued a severe cold alert for the districts of Bidar, Kalaburagi, and Raichur. *—PTI*

Low price of Toor dal upsets Kalaburagi farmers

KALABURAGI, 19 JAN

The Togari (Pigeon pea or Toor Dal) harvest in the district is nearing its end, with an expected production of 5 lakh tonnes. The quantity of Togari being brought to the agricultural produce market is increasing daily, which has led to a drop in prices, causing distress among growers.

In the APMC, the price of a quintal has decreased by about 1,000 in the last month, now standing at Rs 8,169 per quintal. Farmers are concerned that this may lead to further price reductions. Kalaburagi district is the largest producer of Togari in the state.

Due to falling prices, growers are hesitant to bring their produce to the market. Only 27,867 quintals were sold between 1 and 16 January, compared to 75,182 quintals during the same period last year.

Expressing his concerns, farmer Sharanbasappa Mamashetty said, " A separate special package should be announced immediately. If not, the United Struggle Committee has called for a Kalaburagi Bandh on 22 January."

Only 27,867 quintals were sold between 1 and 16 January, compared to 75,182 quintals during the same period last year PHOTO: SALAR

Samad Patel, Joint Director of the District Agriculture Department, mentioned that 2 lakh tonnes of Togari will be purchased from the district under the support price scheme.

Of the 6.06 lakh hectares sown in the district, 2 lakh hectares of sorghum crops were completely destroyed, leading to a loss of Rs 25,000 per acre. Farmers are demanding a solution. Leader Maula Mulla stressed the need for crop insurance for dried Togari, with a support price of Rs 12,550 per quintal, along with Rs 500 from the CM Avartha Fund.

Another farmer Santakumar Hasargundgi said, "Due to the arrival of the new crop in the market, the price of paddy has fallen considerably. It has come down by Rs 30 per kg and is expected to fall further. The price of chickpeas has also decreased." *—Salar News*

15 Jarkiholi-led MLAs plan Dubai trip despite curbs

BELAGAVI, 19 JAN

Following the party high command's intervention to prevent gatherings after Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Satish Jarkiholi hosted a dinner for like-minded legislators in Bengaluru, plans for a foreign tour have emerged, with 15 legislators showing support for the initiative.

Asif Sait, Congress legislator from Belagavi North announced that 15 party legislators are set to travel to Dubai on a trip sponsored by the minister.

Sait clarified that Jarkiholi would not be accompanying. Preparations for air tickets and accommodation are underway. "It's just a friendly tour. While we often discuss various matters during legislative sessions in Belagavi and Bengaluru, we have lacked the opportunity to share our feelings. This Dubai tour will help bring legislators from different parts of the state closer together," he stated. Sait insisted that although the tour is sponsored by Jarkiholi, it does not relate directly to him, nor does it signify discontent or a power play to position Jarkiholi as the chief of the state party. *—Salar News*

Activist Snehamayi demands release of MUDA site details

MYSURU, 19 JAN

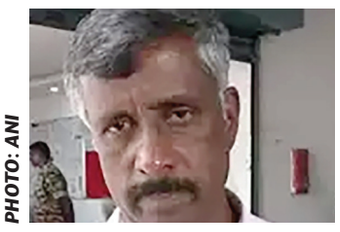


PHOTO: ANI

Activist Snehamayi Krishna, a petitioner in the MUDA case, on Sunday urged the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) to release details of the 142 sites attached by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the MUDA scam. Speaking to reporters, he welcomed the ED's decision to attach the sites and alleged that the scam has adversely affected the poor.

He pointed out that developers who had obtained sites from MUDA under the 50:50 scheme may attempt to sell these sites to buyers without disclosing the ED's attachment. Krishna emphasised that it would be helpful to buyers if MUDA released a public notice listing the 142 ED-attached sites, including their numbers and locations.

Krishna also mentioned that he had sent a message to MUDA Commissioner Raghunandan via WhatsApp, requesting action on this matter. *—Salar News*

Yatnal continues tirade against Vijayendra

VIJAYAPURA, 19 JAN

Vijayapura BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal on Sunday again intensified his attack on BY Vijayendra, saying that he cannot accept him as BJP state president.

He asked Vijayendra's father and former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa to give up his 'infatuation' for his son and focus on the party. "We can't accept him (Vijayendra as BJP state chief). It's not possible. How can we accept a man who sent his father to the jail by making duplicate (forged) signature? Congress leader B K Hariprasad had said this. Our party does not allow it. Our high command should take it seriously," Yatnal said. Meanwhile, Vijayendra said the party high command has blessed him due to which he is holding the post for the past one year. *—PTI*

T Narasipura gets ₹6 crore for Kumbh Mela

MYSURU, 19 JAN

Social Welfare and District In-charge Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa on Sunday said, the Mysuru district administration has submitted to the State government a proposal for Rs 10 crore for organising the three-day Kumbh Mela – 2025 celebrations from 10 February in T Narasipura town, the confluence point off rivers Cauvery, Kapila and Gupthagamini.

Even though it is a religious event, Mahadevappa said, he

- Mahadevappa said this would be 11th Kumbh Mela which is celebrated once in three years in the town. He said the event was started when he was the district in-charge minister in 1989

has instructed officials to celebrate it with all religious and scientific temperament. He said that the state government will sanction at least Rs six crore for the celebration this year, against the Rs 10 crore sought by the government.

Mahadevappa said this would be 11th Kumbh Mela which is celebrated once in three years in the town. The event was started when he was the district in-charge minister in 1989, with support of religious leaders from Suttur Mutt, Adichunchanagiri and Kailashrama Mutt.

In the previous Kumbh Mela, the district administration roped in military personnel for the construction of a temporary bridge across the river. About five spots have been identified by the officials for devotees to take the holy dip in the river, he said.

Mahadevappa said he has also instructed officials to illuminate streets connecting temples to Kumbha Mela, besides taking steps to discourage use of harmful plastic items, setting up mobile toilets, changing rooms and yagashalas for performing the Kumbh Mela rituals. *—Salar News*

'ONE SKY, ONE EARTH, ONE FAMILY'

Kites soar at 8th Int'l kite festival in M'luru

MANGALURU, 19 JAN

Kites inspired by Indian art forms, including Kathakali and Yakshagana, as well as designs such as Pushpaka Vimana and Gajaraja Garuda, graced the skies of Mangaluru during the 8th International Kite Festival. The event took place at Tannirbhavi Beach on Saturday, inaugurated by Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao.

Minister Rao remarked on the festival's expanding international appeal, noting the participation of a kite-flying world champion from Greece. "With such global interest, the festival has immense scope to attract even larger audiences. Let us aim to host a grander, more competitive event next year," he stated.

Organised by Team Mangaluru, an amateur kite-flying group, in collaboration with ONGC MRPL and the district administration as part of the Karavali Utsav, this year's theme was "One Sky, One Earth, One Family." The intricate kites, having already showcased Indian culture at international festivals in France, Italy, Canada, and South Korea, captivated attendees.

Visitors during Mangaluru International Kite Festival, in Mangaluru, Karnataka PHOTO: PTI

The festival drew enthusiastic participation from thousands of visitors and kite lovers, with international teams from countries such as England, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, Indonesia, and Portugal joining Indian participants from states including Odisha, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Telangana, Kerala, and Gujarat. *—PTI*

Chamarajpet residents accuse police of harassment

BENGALURU, 19 JAN

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Residents of Chamarajpet have alleged police highhandedness after an FIR was filed against over 40 individuals, including women, for staging a protest outside the police station. The people claimed that they were unjustly targeted while seeking action against alleged drug peddlers in the area.

"We are living in fear due to the activities of drug peddlers here. Women are afraid to step out, especially at night," said Ayub Khan, a local resident. According to him, tensions escalated after Mehboob Pasha, the president of the Tipu Nagar Masjid Committee, warned an auto driver, Neyamath Pasha, for allegedly engaging in drug-related activities. "Mehboob Pasha had warned Neyamath about filing a complaint if he continued his behaviour. In retaliation, Neyamath smashed the window panes of Mehboob's car," Khan added.

Following the incident, a group of men confronted Neyamath for damaging Mehboob's car and a scuffle ensued between them.

According to Police Sub-Inspector Anil Kumar, the incident unfolded on 14 January after a team of officers conducted a spot inspection regarding a complaint filed under the Prevention of Destruction and Loss of Property Act. The complaint alleged that Neyamath Pasha had been assaulted by a group of five youths identified as Saleem, Siddique, Chandan, Masood, and Shabbir, who also damaged his auto-rickshaw near Tipu Nagar Masjid on 13 January.

"We wanted the authorities to address the drug menace, but instead, they treated us like criminals," said one resident. *—Salar News*

Centre should hold talks with farmers at earliest: Minister

CHANDIGARH, 19 JAN

If the Centre's intentions are right, it should hold a meeting with the protesting farmers at the earliest rather than on 14 February which has been fixed now, Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian said on Sunday. His statement came a day after the Centre invited the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) for talks on 14 February at Chandigarh. "Dallewal's (farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal who has been on a fast-unto-death since 26 November) health is worrisome. The ministry should hold the meeting with protesting farmers at the earliest," Khuddian told PTI on Sunday. "If their (Centre's) intentions are right then they should hold talks within a day or two." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Assam summit: Himanta to visit Tokyo, Seoul

GUWAHATI, 19 JAN

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma embarked on a trip to South Korea and Japan on Sunday to invite prospective investors and entrepreneurs for the Advantage Assam Summit 2.0, a business conclave to be hosted by the state government here next month. He will attend roadshows presenting the summit during the visits, with such events being held in a total of eight countries. In a post, the CM said the visit to the two Asian countries will be over a period of five days. "During my stay, I intend to showcase Assam - the gateway to South East Asia and blessed with excellent human capital as a key anchor state in strengthening Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji's Act East Policy," the CM added. *—PTI*

CPI(M) rejects woman councillor's abduction charges

KOCHI, 19 JAN

The ruling CPI (M) in Kerala on Sunday rejected the allegations of abduction levelled by its party councillor ahead of a no-confidence motion moved in the Koothattukulam Municipality and said no physical assault took place. Dramatic scenes unfolded outside the LDF-ruled Municipality on Saturday ahead of the motion moved by the opposition UDF, as Kala Raju, a CPI(M) woman councillor, was allegedly abducted in broad daylight upon her arrival to vote in the motion. As the issue triggered a huge political controversy, PB Ratheesh, the area secretary of the CPI (M) in Koothattukulam, on Sunday rejected the allegations and claimed that she didn't suffer any physical assault by the party workers and leaders. *—PTI*

WB sees unchecked Rohingya settlement: BJP

KOLKATA, 19 JAN

West Bengal BJP president Sukanta Majumdar on Sunday alleged that West Bengal is witnessing an unbridled settlement of Rohingyas due to the patronage of the ruling Trinamool Congress. "Rohingyas have settled in parts of Salt Lake, North Kolkata and besides fish bheries (small ponds for aquaculture) with the help of the Trinamool Congress leaders," Majumdar, also the Union Minister of State for Education and DoNER told a news portal. He also said that the Rohingyas will attack if a person click any photo of their settlement. Majumdar alleged that the Trinamool Congress government is helping the Rohingyas to settle in the state. He said it is the duty of the Border Security Force to protect the country's border. *—PTI*

Kejri proposes joint housing scheme for Delhi govt staff

He urged PM to allocate land at highly subsidised rates

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

As the Delhi Assembly elections approach, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal has proposed a joint housing scheme aimed at benefitting government employees, particularly sanitation workers, in the national capital. He addressed a press conference on Sunday, urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allocate land at "highly subsidised" rates for the Delhi government to build affordable housing units. Kejriwal emphasised the hardships faced by post-retirement government employees, especially Safai Karamcharis, stating that many live in slums due to insufficient pensions and savings.

He suggested piloting the scheme with employees from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), before expanding it to all government employees. "Housing is a major problem in Delhi for the poor... I have seen many Safai Karamcharis, after retirement, forced to live in slums," he remarked, expressing hope that the Prime Minister would support this welfare-oriented initiative.

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal during a meeting with Aggarwal community ahead of Delhi Assembly polls, in Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

In a related bid for voter support, AAP candidate Jitender Singh Shunty, known as the "Ambulance Man," outlined his vision for Shahdara constituency, focusing on women's empowerment. He proposed initiatives such as 'pink ambulances' staffed exclusively by women, hostels for working women, and creches for their children. Shunty also addressed women's safety with plans for a Quick Response Team and a disaster management team to tackle emergencies in densely populated areas.

With the Delhi polls set for 5 February, Shunty promised to personally connect with voters through door-to-door campaigns, while Kejriwal has made several other poll pledges, including the Mahila Samman Yojna, free medical treatment for the elderly, and waivers on inflated water bills. Results of the election will be announced on 8 February. *—PTI*

BJP targeted Kejri, attacker linked to Parvesh: Atishi

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of conspiring to "eliminate" Arvind Kejriwal, suggesting that they cannot defeat him in the upcoming elections. The allegations surfaced following an incident on Saturday evening, when stones were reportedly thrown at Kejriwal's car while he campaigned in New Delhi.

In response to the attack, Parvesh Verma, Kejriwal's opponent in the forthcoming Delhi assembly elections, claimed that the vehicle struck three youths protesting against the AAP leader, asserting it was Kejriwal who instructed the driver to do so.

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi claimed that one of the alleged assailants, identified as Rahul alias Shanky, has a history of criminal offences and is "frequently seen" with Verma. *—PTI*

AMID BEED MURDER

Guardian ministers named in M'rashtra, Dhananjay excluded

MUMBAI/ SHIRDI 19 JAN

NCP leader and Food and Civil Supplies minister Dhananjay Munde did not find a place in the list of guardian ministers released by the Maharashtra government.

Ministers in Maharashtra are given responsibility for one or more districts. The announcement was awaited after the formation of the new BJP-NCP-Shiv Sena government last month. The state has 36 districts.

As per the list released on Saturday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also handles the Home department, would be the guardian minister of the Naxal-affected Gadchiroli district, while Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has been allotted Beed district in addition to Pune, Pawar's home district.

Dhananjay Munde, MLA from Parali in Beed, was the guardian minister of this central Maharashtra district in the previous government. But recently, he came under fire from both Opposition as well as local BJP MLAs over the brutal murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh in the district. Walmik Karad, Munde's associate, has been arrested in connection with the case.

Ajit Pawar, who heads the

Dhananjay Munde **PHOTO: PTI**

NCP, had refused to ask Munde to resign over the controversy. Meanwhile, embattled Maharashtra minister Dhananjay Munde on Sunday fell back on the Mahabharata to claim he cannot be cornered like Abhimanyu as he was ace archer Arjun.

Munde is under attack from the opposition as well the ruling Mahayuti leaders in connection with the 9 December abduction and murder of Beed sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh.

The police registered a murder case and an extortion case linked to the killing. Munde's close aide Walmik Karad has been arrested in the extortion case, following which many leaders have demanded his sacking from the Devendra Fadnavis government. *—PTI*

LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during his visit to Bihar had pledged to advocate for a nationwide caste census **PHOTO: PTI**

RaGa under fire over 'fake' Bihar caste survey claim

- JD(U) Minister countered Gandhi's remarks, suggesting that they stem from a lack of understanding regarding the Indian political system

PATNA, 19 JAN

The ruling NDA coalition in Bihar has strongly responded to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's assertion that the state's caste survey, conducted by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's government, is "fake." Gandhi, during his first visit to Bihar since the Lok Sabha elections, pledged to advocate for a nationwide caste census and dismissed the Bihar survey as an attempt to "befool people."

JD(U) Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary countered Gandhi's remarks, suggesting that they stem from a lack of understanding regarding the Indian political system. He reminded that the Congress party had consistently supported the survey and noted that the government is open to addressing any credible issues raised.

BJP leader Syed Shahnawaz Hussain said the contradiction in Gandhi's stance, having previously endorsed the caste survey. Bihar BJP chief Dilip Jaiswal added a sarcastic remark, challenging Gandhi to clarify his own caste identity before commenting on the census.

State Congress president Akhilesh Prasad Singh defended Gandhi, asserting that the survey's findings have since been neglected by the Chief Minister, particularly after his alliance with the BJP. Singh highlighted that although the survey indicated an increase in the population of Dalits and backclasses, efforts to legislate quotas based on these results were halted by the Patna High Court, and the government is now pursuing a challenge in the Supreme Court.

Singh urged Kumar to take proactive measures for the benefit of disadvantaged communities by revising the legislation and leveraging his party's influence at the Centre to safeguard any new proposals from judicial scrutiny. *—PTI*

TDP demands Nara Lokesh's elevation as Andhra DyCM

AMARAVATI, 19 JAN

Within the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), there is a notable push for the elevation of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's son, Nara Lokesh, to the role of Deputy Chief Minister. Currently serving as Minister for Human Resources Development and IT, Lokesh is the sole focus of this demand amidst a political landscape that includes Janasena Chief Pawan Kalyan, who currently holds the Deputy CM position.

AP Legislative Assembly Deputy Speaker K Raghu Rama Krishna Raju commented on the growing interest among party leaders for Lokesh's promotion. "To my knowledge, the TDP cadre are very keen to see our general secretary appointed as Deputy CM. This sentiment is widespread," he stated. Supporters argue that his recent membership drive, which reportedly attracted one crore new members, justifies this call for elevation.

A senior TDP leader expressed concerns that Janasena might view Lokesh's promotion as a threat, but underscored that the final decision rests with Chief Minister Naidu. They believe

Nara Lokesh **PHOTO: X**

- During a recent TDP meeting, senior leader Srinivas Reddy urged Naidu to promote Lokesh, saying it would boost confidence among youth and party supporters

Lokesh should be positioned to lead both the party and the government in the future, further encouraging this demand.

During a recent TDP meeting, senior leader Srinivas Reddy urged Naidu to promote Lokesh, saying it would boost confidence among youth and party supporters. Meanwhile, TDP spokesperson Mahasena Rajesh expressed frustration at Lokesh's current ministerial role and insisted that the party's future hinges on him. *—PTI*

NAIDU TO PROMOTE 'BRAND AP' AT WEF DAVOS

AMARAVATI, 19 JAN

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is set to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, beginning this Sunday, aiming to promote "Brand AP" and establish the state as a prime investment destination for global leaders and industrialists.

Naidu is focused on showcasing Andhra Pradesh's strengths, including its skilled workforce, robust infrastructure, government incentives, stable leadership, and business-friendly environment to attract both national and international investors.

In Zurich, Naidu will meet with India's ambassador to Switzerland and hold discussions with local industrialists about investment opportunities. *—PTI*

Mukesh Ambani, Nita to attend Trump's inauguration

WASHINGTON DC, 19 JAN

Business tycoon Mukesh Ambani and his wife Nita will attend US President-elect Donald Trump's second inauguration that will also likely be attended by some of America's most influential billionaires and politicians as well as foreign leaders and celebrities.

The Ambanis, who reached US capitol Washington on 18 January, were part of a select 100 who attended an intimate 'candlelit dinner' with trump, sources with knowledge of the matter said.

They were perhaps the only Indians to attend the dinner where Vice President-elect JD and Usha Vance also met them.

The couple will attend the 20 January inauguration as the personal invitee of the Trump family, they said.

Ambanis share close ties with the Trump family.

The richest Indian was present when Ivanka Trump, daughter of Donald Trump, visited Hyderabad for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in 2017. She was an advisor to President Trump then.

He was also present when Trump visited India last as US President in February 2020. *—PTI*

US President-elect Donald Trump with Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani and wife Nita Ambani in Washington DC **PHOTO: PTI**

MANN KI BAAT

EC used tech to empower people : PM

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the Election Commission on Sunday, saying it has used the power of technology to strengthen people's power and also shown commitment to a fair polling process.

Modi's praise for the poll body in his monthly Mann ki Baat broadcast came ahead of its foundation day on 25 January, observed as the National Voters' Day, and amid frequent criticism from the opposition for its alleged pro-BJP bias.

The EC has modernised and strengthened the election process from time to time, Modi asserted.

Opposition parties have increasingly raised questions on the integrity of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and Modi's remarks can be seen as an endorsement of the EVMs.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said EC has modernised and strengthened the election process from time to time **PHOTO: PTI**

The prime minister said doubts were cast on India's viability as a democracy after it became independent, but the country proved them wrong. After all, India is mother of democracy, he said.

The programme was held on the third Sunday this month as against the last, which is usually the case, as next Sunday is Republic Day, Modi noted.

The prime minister played short audio clips of some of the members of India's constituent assembly, including its chairman Rajendra Prasad, Bhim Rao Ambedkar and Syama Prasad Mookerjee, to highlight the values they promoted.

Ambedkar called for everyone to work together in everyone's interest, while Prasad highlighted India's commitment to humanistic values, he noted.

The Republic Day will mark the 75th anniversary of the implementation of Constitution, he said.

Speaking of the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, the prime minister said people of various castes and regions have come together. There is no discrimination of any kind, he added. *—PTI*

Budget must eliminate raid raj and tax terrorism: Cong

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The Congress claimed Sunday the Modi government's "retrograde policies" have broken the confidence of investors in India and converted "ease of doing business to unease in doing business".

The upcoming budget must eliminate "raid raj and tax terrorism" to fix this, the opposition party said.

It also called on the government to take action to protect Indian manufacturing jobs and take decisive action to shore up wages and purchasing power.

Congress General Secretary (In-charge, Communications) Jairam Ramesh said the Modi government has long proclaimed its desire to improve the "ease of doing business" in India but yet in the past decade "we have only seen an easing of private investment which has fallen to record lows and the easing out of businesspersons who have departed India

Jairam Ramesh. **PHOTO: PTI**

in large numbers for foreign shores".

The biggest component of investment which is private domestic investment has been weak since 2014, Ramesh said, adding it was solidly in the 25-30 per cent of GDP range during Manmohan Singh's tenure as PM.

An estimated 21,300 dollar-millionaires left India between 2022 and 2025, he claimed.

Ramesh claimed that 18,000 fraudulent entities have been uncovered with many more likely undetected. *—PTI*

Man killed in MP after dispute over loud music

ASHOK NAGAR, 19 JAN

A man was killed by two neighbours after his granddaughter objected to the loud music they were playing in Madhya Pradesh's Ashok Nagar district, police said on Sunday. Police arrested the accused, Ratiram Ahirwar and Mukesh Ahirwar, at Gorakala village under Chanderi police station limits on Friday night, an official said. Chanderi police station in-charge Manish Jadaun said the victim's granddaughter, a Class 12 student, objected to the loud music the accused were playing a few days ago. Jadaun said that on Friday night, the accused quarrelled with the girl's parents and the couple fled the spot to save themselves. The men then attacked the victim, Kalua Ahirwar, with a stick and shovel, killing him. *—PTI*

Father-son duo killed, 2 injured in bear attack

KANKER, 19 JAN

A man and his son were killed, and two others sustained injuries in a sloth bear attack in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district, officials said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday on a hill near Dongarkatta village under the Korar forest range, a forest official said. He said the bear first attacked Suklal Darro, 45 and Ajju Kureti, 22 when they had gone to collect wood on Jailnkasa Hill. While Darro died on the spot, Kureti sustained serious injuries, he said. The official said forest and police personnel reached the spot and sifted the injured man to a hospital. When they were removing Darro's body, the animal attacked again, killing Darro's father Shankar Darro, he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Video of IIT Madras director promoting gomutra goes viral

CHENNAI, 19 JAN

A video clip of IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti purportedly praising the 'medicinal value' of gomutra has gone viral in the social media. The director allegedly endorsed the 'anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, and digestive properties,' of gomutra and said it is useful for conditions such as the Irritable Bowel Syndrome and batted for consideration of its 'medicinal value.' He made that comment while narrating an anecdote from the life of a sanyasi who consumed gomutra when he had high fever; taking part in an event held at a Go Samrakshana Sala on the day of Maatu Pongal, 15 January. Congress leader Karti P Chidambaram slammed the remark, and said "Peddling pseudoscience by @iitmadras Director is most unbecoming @IMAIndiaOrg." Sources in the premium institution confirmed that the remarks were made by Kamatkoti and they added that he being an 'organic farmer,' he spoke at the goshala event and there was a larger context to his remarks. *—PTI*

Vehicle pile-up amid dense fog in UP leaves 1 dead

AMETHI, 19 JAN

Low visibility because of dense fog led to a multi-vehicle pile-up here on Sunday, leaving a truck driver dead and two others injured, police said. The incident took place around 4am when the Kamarouli railway crossing was closed due to the arrival of a train. A truck rammed into a car waiting at the crossing and thereafter five vehicles collided with each other. Station House Officer of Kamarouli police station Abhinesh Kumar said truck driver Rohit Pandey, 30, a resident of Jais of Amethi district, died while two others were injured.The body of the deceased has been sent for postmortem. *—PTI*

Will accept son's destiny, says RG Kar convict's mom

Roy's sister says others' roles should also be probed

KOLKATA, 19 JAN

The mother of Sanjoy Roy, who was convicted for the rape and murder of the medic of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, on Sunday said if her son is guilty, then he should get the punishment he deserves, even if it means hanging.

She said she will "cry alone" but will accept his punishment as destiny.

Initially reticent to speak to the media after the Sealdah court convicted Sanjay on 18 January, Malati Roy the mother of Sanjay told reporters on Sunday morning that being a woman, and a mother of three daughters, "I can feel the anguish and pain of the mother of the woman medic who is like my daughter."

"If the court decides to hang him to death, I don't have any objection as his crime has been proved in the eye of the law, I will cry alone but accept it as a quirk of fate, something willed by destiny," the 70-year-old-woman said standing on the doorstep of her shanty on Shambhunath Pandit Street, about 5 km away from the commotion and buzz at Sealdah Court the other day.

RG Kar murder convict Sanjoy Roy with a police officer *PHOTO: ANI*

One of the elder sisters, who lives close to Malati's home, at her in-law's place, on Saturday said in case he is proven guilty, the law should take its own course punishing him and the family has no plan to challenge the order on its own in any court.

"As we did not have regular contact with him in the past few years and he used to live in a separate locality I don't have any fair idea about his associations and whether he was involved in any criminal offence," she said.

The woman, however, added "There are reports in media that Sanjay was not alone at the site of crime. Had others been involved directly or indirectly that should also be investigated and they should be brought to book."

"Since Sanjay's arrest, we were under the stigma and everyone from neighbours to relatives would point fingers at us saying we are Sanjay's kin," the elder sister said. *—PTI*

SC appoints amicus to review plea on civil service exam answer keys

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The Supreme Court has appointed an amicus curiae to assist it on a plea of civil service aspirants, seeking direction to the UPSC for disclosure of the answer keys, cut-off marks and marks of the candidates appearing in civil service (preliminary) examination.

The UPSC in almost all the previous examinations, including the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination of 2023, has maintained that the marks, cut off marks and the answer keys shall be disclosed "only" after the entire process of exam is over.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Manoj Misra appointed senior advocate Jaideep Gupta as amicus curiae to assist it in the matter and asked the petitioners to serve a copy of the petition on him.

"We have requested Jaideep Gupta, senior advocate present in the court to assist the court as amicus curiae in this matter which request Mr Gupta has graciously accepted," it said in its order of 15 January.

PHOTO: X

- The UPSC in almost all the previous examinations, including the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination of 2023, has maintained that the marks, cut off marks and the answer keys shall be disclosed "only" after the entire process of exam is over

During the hearing, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for 17 UPSC aspirants, said the UPSC's conduct in not disclosing the details lacks transparency.

He said if the answer keys, cut-off marks and marks of the candidates/aspirants are disclosed, they would be entitled to avail "effective" remedies against wrong and incorrect evaluation on rational and demonstrable basis.

The top court also asked the Centre and the UPSC to file an additional affidavit explaining the difficulties that the institution(s) may face, if the prayers in the writ petition are accepted with the necessary data available.

It posted the matter for further hearing on 4 February.

The court had in February last year agreed to examine the petition filed through advocate Rajeev Kumar Dubey. *—PTI*

Tourist, instructor die while paragliding in Goa

PANAJI, 19 JAN

A 27-year-old woman tourist and her instructor were killed after they crashed into a ravine while they were paragliding in North Goa, police said on Sunday. The accident occurred at Keri village on Saturday evening, an official said. Shivani Dable, a resident of Pune, and her instructor, Sumal Nepali, 26, a Nepalese national, crashed to death at Keri Plateau around 5pm, he said.

The official said Dable had opted to paraglide with an adventure sports company operating illegally.

As per the complaint, the paraglider plunged into a ravine soon after it took off from a cliff, killing the duo on the spot, he said. A case has been registered at Mandrem police station against company owner Shekhar Raizada under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita for endangering human life. *—PTI*

BANGLA LINK

Police take the man arrested in connection with the attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan to a hospital for medical examination before producing him at a court in Mumbai *PHOTO: PTI*

Police examining int'l conspiracy in Saif knife-attack

MUMBAI, DURG 19 JAN

A Mumbai court on Sunday remanded a man arrested in the Saif Ali Khan attack case to police custody till 24 January after observing that the police's contention of an international conspiracy cannot be ruled out.

Police told the court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi national and there was need to find the motive behind his act. Police also told the court they needed to find out if there was an international conspiracy linked to the case.

Earlier in the day, police had told the media that alleged attacker Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad, 30, was a Bangladeshi national who had illegally entered India and changed his name to Bijoy Das. He was arrested from adjoining Thane city.

Meanwhile, a labour contractor helped the Mumbai police track down the attacker, who stabbed actor Saif Ali Khan, in the neighbouring Thane district, an official said on Sunday.

During the probe, the police found that the accused was seen outside Dadar railway station thrice and had gone to Worli Koliwada, he said.

The police examined hundreds of CCTV footage and found out that the attacker had visited a labour contractor in the area, he said.

A man who was detained in Chhattisgarh's Durg railway station in connection with the 16 January Saif Ali Khan attack case was released on Sunday, a police official said.

Mumbai police, earlier in the day, informed that it had arrested a 30-year-old man from Thane near the metropolis in the case. *—PTI*

COLOURS OF UNITY

A woman prepares to make the Tricolour ahead of Republic Day–2025 in Nadia, West Bengal, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

M'rashtra siblings found dead in Kerala hotel

T'PURAM, 19 JAN

Two people, including a woman, from Maharashtra were found dead in a hotel room in the Kerala capital on Sunday morning.

The deceased are siblings and natives of Pune, police said.

The duo had checked into the hotel on last Friday, they added.

The hotel staff, who noticed the room remained closed in the morning, soon alerted the police station.

The man was found hanging while the woman was found dead on the bed, police said.

A suicide note was recovered from the room, which indicated that the duo had neither a home nor a job.

"A suicide note was recovered and based on further investigation only we can say more details," a top police officer, who examined the spot said. An investigation is underway to determine why the siblings came to the Kerala capital and what led them to take the extreme step, the police said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

- AThe hotel staff, who noticed the room remained closed in the morning, soon alerted the police station
- The man was found hanging while the woman was found dead on the bed, police said

3 dead, 4 missing as boat capsizes in Ganga in Bihar

KATIHAR, 19 JAN

Three people were killed and four others went missing after a boat capsized in the Ganga in Bihar's Katihar district on Sunday, officials said.

The boat, with 17 people on board, capsized near Golaghat in the Amdabad area, they said, adding that 10 people have been rescued so far.

Officials said most of the victims managed to swim to the bank. "A search is on for four missing persons. An investigation has been ordered to find the cause of the incident," District Magistrate Manesh Kumar Meena said.

Two of the deceased were identified as Pawan Kumar, 60, and Sudhir Mandal, 70, while the other person could not be identified yet, police officials said. —PTI

Bird flu confirmed in Latur crows; authorities take preventive steps

LATUR, 19 JAN

As many as 51 crows have died of bird flu in Maharashtra's Latur district, and authorities have started taking preventive measures to contain the spread of the disease, an official said on Sunday.

A report from the Bhopal Veterinary Laboratory that arrived on Saturday revealed that the crows in Udgir city have died of avian influenza (H5N1), Deputy Commissioner for Animal Husbandry Dr Shridhar Shinde told PTI.

The authorities have been receiving complaints about dead birds in gardens, among other areas in the city, since 13 January.

Officials visited the affected areas, and six carcasses were sent to the laboratory on 14 January to ascertain the cause of death, the official said.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Latur collector Varsha Thakur-Ghuge has issued directives under the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, declaring alert zones within a 10-km radius of where the carcasses were found.

The order prohibits the movement of citizens and the transportation of birds and animals in the affected areas.

The administration has urged residents to report any unusual deaths of birds or animals in other parts of the district to the nearest veterinary hospital or forest department. *—PTI*

DIGITAL EYE

High-tech command centre keeping Maha Kumbh secure

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, 19 JAN

A sprawling temporary city spread over 10,000 acres, more than a crore of pilgrims and seers living on the site at a time and about 20 lakh visitors daily – the Integrated Control Command Centre here is keeping a hawk's eye to ensure smooth crowd management through continuous monitoring.

More than 400 people each in four Integrated Control Command Centres (ICCC) keep a continuous watch on big screens displaying live footage and data from hotspots to alert the personnel on crowd density and pilgrim flow.

The source of the visuals -- more than 3,000 cameras, underwater drones and a battery of over 60,000 personnel on the ground.

The mega-religious event, organised every 12 years, is being held in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days. More than seven crore pilgrims have so far taken a holy dip at the Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers.

According to Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar, an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre and the ICCC in-charge, the data being captured was accurate to ensure there were no more "guesstimates".

"This is the first time in the world that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being used for crowd management at this scale. We have installed more than 3,000 cameras across the mela area and the city, of which 1,800 are AI-enabled. There is absolute no guess work, everything is based on real-time data being captured extensively," Kumar told PTI.

"An alert pops up each time there is a barricade breach or traffic convergence from all directions leads to congestion or even if there is a fire," he added.

Additionally, 30 pontoon bridges and grand entry and exit gates are also under the scanner of cameras, besides the ghats and other areas in the mela ground.

In 1954, more than 400 people were killed in the Kumbh after being trampled or drowned in one of the deadliest crowd-related disasters worldwide. At least 36 people died during the 2013 festival, the last time it was held in Prayagraj. *—PTI*

Officials inside the Integrated Control and Command Centre for crowd management watch over the Maha Kumbh Mela–2025 in Uttar Pradesh's Mahakumbh Nagar *PHOTO: PTI*

HONOURING CULTURE

School students perform during Kokborok Day celebrations, in Agartala, on Sunday. Kokborak Day is celebrated to honour the Kokborak language, which is spoken primarily by people in Tripura. It is observed on 19 January each year to promote the preservation and promotion of the Kokborak language, culture, and heritage
PHOTO: PTI

Is the United States poised to become an oligarchy?

In his farewell address, outgoing US President Joe Biden warned "an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power and influence that literally threatens our entire democracy".

The comment suggests that, under Donald Trump's second term as president, it will be billionaires rather than the people who shape public policy.

There is certainly some evidence Biden's ominous caution should be taken seriously.

The world's richest man and the owner of X, Elon Musk, has been a vocal supporter of the Republican candidate. Other billionaire tech moguls to visit Trump at his Mar-a-Lago mansion after his 2024 election victory include Meta's Mark Zuckerberg, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Apple's Tim Cook and Google chief executive Sundar Pichai.

There is nothing unusual about business leaders wanting the ear of an incoming president. What has concerned Biden and others is that so many of Trump's influential backers also own media platforms and have the ability to sway public opinion.

Like many of the academic and scientific categories we still use today, oligarchy was originally defined by the Greek philosopher Aristotle.

In The Politics, he argued people are "political animals", social by nature, and instinctively want to live in a community. He studied different governments of the ancient world and concluded there were six essential types.

A state could be ruled by a single leader, a small group of elites, or through mass participation of the people. If the leadership acted in the common advantage (koine sumpheron), he termed these constitutions to be monarchy, aristocracy or polity, respectively. So for Aristotle, an oligarchy is a corrupt form of government. It is when power is in the hands of a small group of elites who advance their own interests rather than the common good.

US President Joe Biden in his farewell speech warned an oligarchy is taking shape in US suggesting that, under Donald Trump's it will be billionaires rather than the people who shape public policy ***PHOTOS: X***

In Aristotelian terms, democracy is also a corrupt form of government in which the majority uses its power to abuse minorities. While the term democracy has been rehabilitated and is usually seen as a positive, the word oligarchy has retained its negative connotations.

When the United States was created, the founding fathers looked back to Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero and other ancient thinkers to try and create the best kind of constitution.

Following the Aristotelian tradition, they tried to design a mixed constitution where neither the one, the few nor the many could dominate the others. The president has great power. But their power is kept in check by Congress and the judiciary, which is in turn kept in check by the media and, ultimately, the people through regular elections. In modern politics, the term oligarch is most often used in a Russian context. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, opportunistic tycoons made enormous fortunes from buying up state assets such as energy companies and financial institutions, which also brought them significant political influence as a result.

Since Vladimir Putin became president in 2000, however, Russia has become increasingly authoritarian. While there is still an oligarchic class, their power has been reined in. They must not challenge Putin's power or vision for the state. Despite Biden's warning of a potential oligarchy, political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page argued back in 2014 the US already was one.

The US has the essential features of a liberal democracy (fair and regular elections, freedom of speech, and an independent press). But Gilens and Page worried large businesses and a small group of affluent citizens had a disproportionate influence on policy.

In Australia also, it could be argued an oligarchy is either emerging or has already taken hold.

Australia has a similar-sized economy to Russia and a growing list of billionaires who appear to have significant influence over government policy.

The power of the Murdoch family and their media empire is well-documented. We have also seen increased political activity from other billionaires including Gina Rinehart, Andrew Forrest and Clive Palmer – who went as far as to start his own political party.

There is no question billionaires in the US and Australia have enormous power and influence. But that in itself Whether it is a symptom of Trumpism, as Biden suggests, or part of a longer trend, strengthening our democratic institutions and curtailing the disinformation and misinformation that are all too prevalent on social media, is part of the solution. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Parties woo Delhi voters with trendy merchandise

Delhi is in the midst of an intense election season and political workers are flaunting their allegiances, sporting creatively designed merchandise with quirky catchphrases and one-liners to attract voters's imagination.

The Aam Aadmi Party, the BJP, the Congress and other smaller players, all are trying to outdo each other as merchandise messaging gets sharper, wittier and personal in appeal.

There are winter-friendly hoodies and colorful stoles, t-shirts and scarfs, funky sunglasses and key chains, custom-made car flags and cutouts, pens and posters, and even mousepads. Anything that can be leveraged is being leveraged.

"These unique items, adorned with party logos and slogans, are not just tools of promotion but also a way to engage supporters in a more personal and vibrant manner," said a leader.

The Aam Aadmi Party's hoodies and stoles come in their signature blue and yellow.

"These feature the face of party's national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on the front and the party logo on the back, instantly making them stand out," said Vikram, a key supplier of political merchandise, based in Sadar Bazar.

The AAP has also ordered customised accessories like keychains, wristbands, badges, and car flags.

"We have prepared bundles of 2,000 to 2,500 large flags and 5,000 smaller ones to meet rally demands," Vikram added. The price of flags varies based on the material and sizes, starting from as low as Rs 2.5 and going up to Rs 165 per piece.

Items like umbrellas, t-shirts, caps, posters, banners are usually in high demand for rallies ***PHOTO: PTI***

- There are winter-friendly hoodies and colorful stoles, t-shirts and scarfs, funky sunglasses and key chains, custom-made car flags and cutouts, pens and posters, and even mousepads. Anything that can be leveraged is being leveraged

BJP has infused a dash of quirkiness into its campaign.

"Funky orange sunglasses with the party name written in white are making waves and the party has also ordered T-shirts featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image, with an option for people to customise them with their own pictures," he said.

The Congress party is opting for utility items. They have placed large orders for mousepads, pens, and keychains carrying party symbol, said the seller.

The demand for political merchandise has soared in the past few weeks, with suppliers reporting a 60 percent surge. "Election season is our busiest time. The creativity and variety in campaign items this year have been exceptional," said Anil Seth, another merchandise supplier from Sadar Bazar.

Seth added that for nominations and rallies, people are purchasing political party's scarfs, garlands, flags and more.

During election time, items like t-shirts, caps, posters, banners, party symbol cutouts, and leaders' face cut-outs are usually in high demand for rallies, he said. Delhi is scheduled to vote on 5 February and the results will be announced on 8 February. *—PTI*

The demand for political merchandise has soared in the past few weeks, with suppliers reporting a 60 percent surge ***PHOTO: PTI***

Coldplay's India concerts expose black market for tickets

While millions of fans cheer British rock band Coldplay's return to India after eight long years, for many, the only way to get tickets was turning to a shadow market where forbidden deals move faster than frontman Chris Martin's fingers over the keyboard.

Over 13 million fans joined a virtual line as early as 22 September last year to purchase tickets for Coldplay's Music of Spheres' tour in Mumbai.

The surge crashed the ticketing website and kicked out many fans. Soon after, tickets emerged on the resale market for up to 100 times the price.

As fans vented their anger on social media, a lawsuit was filed alleging foul play by the ticketing platform, and authorities opened an investigation into ticket scalping.

One fan told DW that she found tickets after looking on social media, and paid five times the original price of around USD110.

"I was a teenager without the means or money to attend their concert in Mumbai when Coldplay played in 2016. There's no way I was going to let this chance go," she said.

To meet demand, Coldplay added more shows, with a total of five in Mumbai and Ahmedabad between 18 and 26 January.

Big-ticket shows an expensive status symbol

For many young Indians, attending big-ticket concerts has emerged as a status symbol.

BookMyShow, the leading company in the sector and the ticketing partner for Coldplay in India, saw sales of live entertainment rise 82 per cent in 2023, according to its year-end report.

International names like Bryan Adams, Alan Walker, Maroon5, Ed Sheeran, and Dua Lipa graced Indian cities last year. Domestic artists like Diljit Dosanjh and Karan Aujla hit dozens of cities with packed shows.

A black market for concert tickets has grown alongside the hype.

Mumbai-based lawyer and Coldplay fan Amit Vyas said it wasn't a surprise when he failed to procure tickets on BookMyShow. But he was taken aback when no one he knew was able to, either.

He said BookMyShow admitted that their servers were down between noon and 12.15 pm on 22 September.

"How is it that over a hundred thousand tickets were sold out in the next fifteen minutes, yet no one seems to have been able to buy them?" Vyas told DW.

British band Coldplay performs during the band's Music Of The Spheres World Tour at the DY Patil Sports Stadium, in Navi Mumbai ***PHOTO: PTI***

Suspecting foul play, Vyas filed a public interest litigation on behalf of Coldplay fans, alleging the ticketing platform had colluded with the black market to sell a large chunk of tickets via third party platforms and sellers.

"Scalpers were selling an unlimited number of tickets for as much as USD15,000 on Viagogo, even before they went live on the exclusive ticketing partner's website. How is that possible without BookMyShow knowing what's going on?" he said.

The lawsuit led to Mumbai Police's economic offenses wing opening an ongoing investigation into BookMyShow and third-party platforms like Viagogo.

BookMyShow and Live Nation – the producer of Coldplay's Music of Spheres tour — among others mentioned in the legal complaint have denied wrongdoing.

Both companies issued statements condemning resale of tickets, denied association with third party sales platforms and warned fans that tickets bought from the black market would not be accepted as valid entry to the venue.

Switzerland-based third party website Viagogo clarified that it had no association with BookMyShow.

Shreyas Srinivasan, the founder of insider.in, an Indian online events dashboard, told DW that the scale of black-market ticketing in India is overblown.

He estimates that the size of the black market for live concerts in India comes in at around 10 per cent of formal sales.

"It happens only for the premium of premium concerts, maybe top 5 per cent of the shows," he said, adding that the hype drives the secondary market.

"This is always going to be the case for big artists because the demand is going to be thousand times the supply." Srinivasan said.

And reselling tickets is not always lucrative. One fan looking for Coldplay tickets told DW that he was introduced to a ticket resale group on Whatsapp called "grey market." He was offered a free ticket if he would help with further sales. Chats in the group indicated that after Coldplay added more shows, and the initial hype wore off, demand began to wane around December.

Some in the group discussed how they had to cut their losses and resell tickets acquired through other sellers for less than what they originally paid.

"Wait for Taylor Swift to come to India, then I'll more than recover my losses," one user quipped.

Of course, scalping concert tickets is not unique to India.

Be it Taylor Swift's Eras Tour or highly anticipated cricket matches, high demand means people are willing to pay.

Some authorities have taken action against ticket resales.

In 2016, the United States passed the Better Online Ticket Sales (BOTS) Act, which makes it illegal for computer bots to bypass security and purchase large quantities of event tickets.

However, even if reselling tickets is forbidden, there is no way for organizers to cross check this at the time of entry.

Srinivasan suggests attaching tickets to a government ID during purchase, and cross-checking IDs during the time of entry is a simple and effective way to cut down illegitimate reselling. Meanwhile, lawyer Vyas said that the Bombay High Court should have issued guidelines for buyer verification to curb scalping, a request the court denied saying the government is responsible for making legislations *—DW News*

PHOTO: X

Militants attack police post in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 19 JAN

Unknown armed militants attacked a police post and set it on fire in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, which has been in the grip of violence for years. The militants reportedly came on motorcycles and attacked the police check post on the outskirts of Turbat city in Kech district on Saturday, reports said. After seizing weapons, radios and other equipment from police officers, the militants ransacked the check post and set it on fire. "The check post was gutted," police officials said. By the time police and Frontier Corps personnel received information about the attack and reached the site, the attackers had managed to escape. Security forces conducted a search for the militants in the area, but in vain, sources said. *—PTI*

Houston braces for Arctic freeze early next week

HOUSTON, 19 JAN

Houston is bracing for a significant Arctic blast with freezing temperatures, icy conditions and even a chance of snow expected to arrive early next week. The rare event has set preparations into motion, with officials and residents taking swift action to stay ahead of the storm. The cold front is forecast to bring cold air and the potential for freezing rain, with temperatures expected to remain below the freezing point for several days. By midweek, sleet and snow may arrive, creating challenging conditions for a city that averages snow only once every four years. As weather reports became more urgent, Houston residents flocked to supermarkets to stock up on essentials, with milk, bread and bottled water flying off the shelves. *—PTI*

Haiti journos bury 2nd colleague, seek justice

PORT AU PRINCE, 19 JAN

Marckendy Natoux, one of two journalists killed by gangs in Haiti, was laid to rest on Saturday. Natoux was fatally shot on Christmas Eve in one of the worst attacks on the Press in the troubled Caribbean country, with gangs opening fire during what was supposed to be the reopening of Haiti's largest public hospital. The 42-year-old spoke four languages and worked for several local and US media outlets. He also taught English and Spanish. "Natoux was a protector of journalists," recalled Oriol Jacklin, a journalist with Radio Regard FM. "He worked with everyone and respected everybody." Natoux did marketing for Voice of America's Creole service and worked for the US Agency for Global Media and the Boston Caribbean Network. *—PTI*

Croatia Deputy PM quits over shooting footage

ZAGREB, 19 JAN

Croatian Deputy Prime Minister Josip Dabro resigned on Saturday after a video surfaced of him firing a gun out of a moving car. Dabro was also agriculture minister in the Cabinet of conservative Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic. The video, seemingly taken at night, showed Dabro laughing while shooting a handgun out of an open window. In his resignation statement, the former minister urged the government to continue its work. "I am aware that these circumstances create an additional burden for the government and my party," Dabro wrote. "My personal situation should not distract the government from their priorities or delay necessary reforms." He said the footage was filmed years ago and he had fired training bullets. *— DW NEWS*

Trump to sign 100 exec orders on Day 1

Prominent ones will be related to Paris Agreement, fossil fuel production and oil drilling

WASHINGTON, 19 JAN

When Donald Trump walks into the White House on Monday afternoon soon after his swearing-in, 100 plus executive orders would be waiting for him on his Oval Office Desk, which his team has prepared for him to kickoff his second term without wasting any minute.

These executive orders are mainly aimed at fulfilling his poll promises. In an interview to NBC news, Trump said he is planning to sign a "record-setting" number of executive actions on Day 1. "Well, at least in that category," he said when asked if these orders would be more than 100.

An executive order is issued unilaterally by the president who carries the force of law. Unlike legislation, executive orders do not require Congressional approval. Though Congress cannot overturn them, they can be challenged in the court of law.

"We have a record-setting number of documents that I'll be signing right after this (inauguration) speech," Trump said.

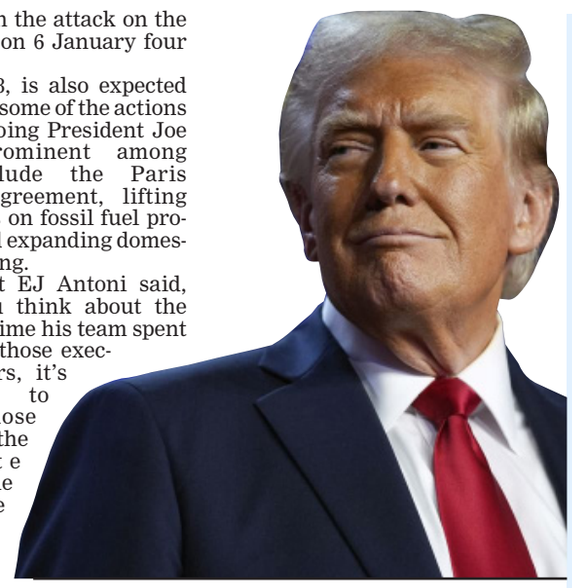
He would be sworn-in as the 47th President of the United States on 20 January.

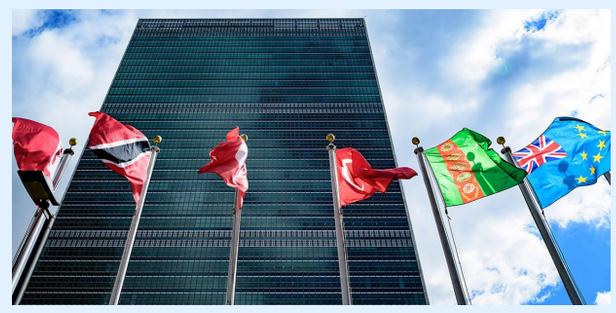
One of his close associates Stephen Miller said these would mainly be around five topics – sealing the Southern border, mass deportation, removing transgenders from women's sports, lifting restrictions on energy exploration and improving government efficiency.

Among his executive orders is expected to be pardoning his supporters arrested for their role in the attack on the US Capitol on 6 January four years ago.

Trump, 78, is also expected to roll back some of the actions of the outgoing President Joe Biden. Prominent among them include the Paris Climate Agreement, lifting restrictions on fossil fuel production and expanding domestic oil drilling.

Economist EJ Antoni said, "When you think about the amount of time his team spent to prepare those executive orders, it's reasonable to think those will be on the Resolute Desk on the day of the inauguration." *—PTI*





Rivals will fill gap if US exits UN: Envoy

WASHINGTON, 19 JAN

The outgoing US ambassador to the United Nations says she watched America's leadership diminish in the world during Donald Trump's first presidency and China fill the vacuum.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield is warning that if it happens again during Trump's second term, adversaries will move in anew.

Thomas-Greenfield said that during Joe Biden's presidency, the United States again engaged with the world, rebuilt alliances and reestablished America's leadership.

"That is the gift that we hand over to the next administration," she said, "and I hope that they will accept that gift in the spirit in which it is being given to them."

In a brief meeting with Trump's nominee, Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, Thomas-Greenfield told her "that the UN is important, and that it is important that we not cede any space to our adversaries."

Those rivals "will change the rules of the road," she warned. "And so, US leadership is extraordinarily important."

In his first term, Trump called the United Nations "just a club for people to get together".

Trump suspended funding to its health and family planning agencies and withdrew from its cultural and education organization UNESCO and top human rights body. That has raised uncertainty about what's ahead. *—PTI*

VOICE OF DISSENT

Thousands gather in Washington on Sunday to protest against President-elect Donald Trump's policies ahead of his inauguration as the 47th President of the United States on Monday
PHOTO: PTI

Taliban top leader calls for girls' education

KABUL, 19 JAN

In a rare public rebuke of government policy, a senior Taliban figure has urged the group's leader to scrap education bans on Afghan women and girls, saying there is no excuse for them,.

Sher Abbas Stanikzai, political deputy at the Foreign Ministry, made the remarks in a speech on Saturday in southeastern Khost province.

Stanikzai said there was no reason to deny education to women and girls, "just as there was no justification for it in the past and there shouldn't be one at all."

The government has barred females from education after sixth grade. Last September, there were reports that authorities had also stopped medical training for women.

In Afghanistan, women and girls can only be treated by female doctors and health professionals. Authorities have yet to confirm the ban. "We call on the leadership again to open the doors of education," said Stanikzai in a video posted on X.

- Sher Abbas Stanikzai, political deputy at the Foreign Ministry, said there was no reason to deny education to women and girls, just as there was no justification for it in the past and there shouldn't be one at all

"We are committing an injustice against 20 million people out of a population of 40 million, depriving them of all their rights. This is not in Islamic law, but our personal choice or nature."

Stanikzai was the head of the Taliban team in talks that led to the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

It is not the first time that he has said that women and girls deserve education. He has made similar remarks in September 2022, a year after schools closed for girls and months before the introduction of a university ban. *—PTI*

A senior Taliban figure says the group's leader should scrap education bans on Afghan women and girls ***PHOTO: X***

Gaza truce sparks hope, celebrations

DEIR AL-BALAH, 19 JAN

The long-awaited ceasefire in Gaza finally began after a nearly three-hour delay, bringing a mix of hope and celebration across the war-torn region. Despite the delay, many Palestinians took the opportunity to return to their homes, eagerly awaiting respite after 15 months of brutal conflict.

Celebrations erupted in Gaza City as families, many of whom had been displaced by the fighting, began to make their way back, some on foot, with their belongings loaded onto donkey carts.

"The sound of shelling and explosions didn't stop," said Ahmed Matter, a Gaza City resident. He said he saw many families leaving their shelters and returning to their homes. "People are impatient. They want this madness to end," he said. Reactions in Israel were more muted, as people hoped for the safe return of the hostages but remained divided over the agreement. Asher Pizem, 35, from the Israeli city of Sderot near Gaza, said he eagerly awaited the return of the captives. But he said the deal had merely postponed the next confrontation with Hamas and criticized Israel for allowing aid into Gaza, saying it would contribute to the revival of the militant group. "They will take the time and attack again," he said while overlooking smoldering ruins in Gaza from a hillock in southern Israel with others who had gathered there.

Palestinians flash V-sign as they return to Rafah after a Israel–Hamas ceasefire deal went into effect in Gaza Strip on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Netanyahu ally quits over Gaza truce deal

The party of Israel's hardline National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir says its Cabinet ministers submitted their resignations from the government on Sunday in opposition to the Gaza ceasefire deal.

The departure of the Jewish Power party from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government does not bring down the coalition or affect the ceasefire. But Ben-Gvir's departure destabilises the coalition. *—PTI*

Yoon tight-lipped about martial law imposition

SEOUL, 19 JAN

Hours after South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol was formally arrested, triggering rioting by his supporters, his lawyers said Sunday that he remained defiant in his refusal to answer questions over the probe into his declaration of martial law last month.

Yoon was formally arrested early on Sunday, days after being apprehended at his presidential compound in Seoul. He faces possible imprisonment over his short-lived authoritarian push, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratization in the late 1980s.

Yoon's arrest could mark the beginning of an extended period in custody, lasting months or more.

The decision to arrest Yoon ignited unrest at the Seoul Western District Court, where his supporters broke in and rioted, destroying the main door and windows. They used plastic chairs, metal beams and police shields that they managed to wrestle away from officers. Some were seen destroying furniture and office machines, smashing glass doors and spraying water on computer servers. They demanded to see the judge who had issued the warrant, but she had already left.

- Yoon's arrest could mark the beginning of an extended period in custody, lasting months or more. The arrest ignited unrest at the Seoul Western District Court

Hundreds of police officers were deployed and nearly 90 protesters were arrested. Some injured police officers were treated in ambulances.

The court said it was trying to confirm whether any staff members were injured and assess the damage to its facilities. *—PTI*

'WE'LL BE BACK'

TikTok shuts down ahead of US embargo

HOUSTON, 19 JAN

TikTok's app effectively shut down in the US on Saturday, hours before a law banning the popular video-sharing platform was set to go into effect.

"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the US. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now," a message reads when American users open the app.

"We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned!"

While the Biden administration dismissed TikTok's shutdown threat as a "stunt" and handed enforcement to the Trump administration, TikTok maintained that without clear assurances, it had no choice but to suspend its services in the US.

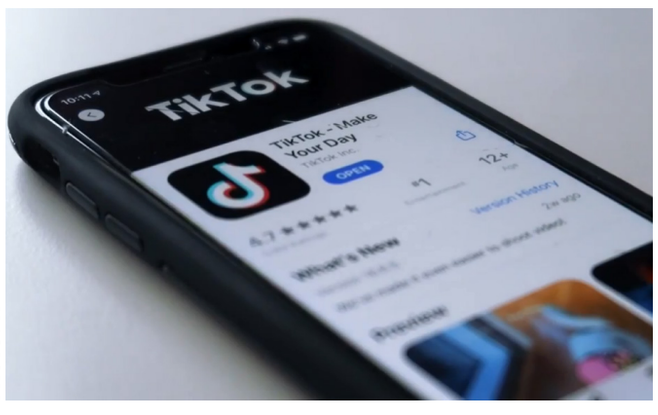


PHOTO: X

An internal email to employees stated that President Trump has expressed his intention to work on a solution to restore TikTok once he assumes office on January 20th. TikTok assured teams are working to resume services as soon as possible.

On Saturday evening, a warning appeared in both TikTok and CapCut apps: "We regret that a US law banning TikTok will take effect on January 19th, forcing us to temporarily suspend our services. We're working to restore our service in the US as soon as possible. Thank you for your support. Stay tuned."

By night, users were blocked from accessing both apps, with TikTok displaying a message that the app "isn't available right now," but expects resolution under President-elect Trump.

It comes after days of speculation and confusion over the platform's future.

The Supreme Court on Friday unanimously upheld the divest-or-ban law, which gave TikTok's China-based parent company ByteDance until Sunday to divest from the app. *—PTI*

Malaysia seeks end to Civil war in Myanmar

LANGKAWI, 19 JAN

Foreign Minister Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad Bin Haji Hasan chaired the ASEAN Foreign

Foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gathered on Sunday for their first meeting this year under the bloc's new chair, Malaysia, seeking a breakthrough over Myanmar's drawn-out civil war and territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The retreat on Langkawi island was the first major meeting of the 10-member ASEAN hosted by Malaysia. Officials said it aims to chart the bloc's direction for the year, including resolving the Myanmar crisis and tensions over China's assertiveness in the South China Sea.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said the ASEAN must bolster unity and make economic integration a top priority amid global uncertainties and US-China rift in the region. He said the second term of Trump has also raised questions on how it will shape the region's dynamics.

"There is much to prepare for. Above all, what we need to anticipate are the potential challenges to ASEAN centrality," he said at the meeting. "We must ensure that ASEAN remains our central go-to platform for solution seeking... We are the speakers and not the spoken-for. We must drive our own path forward." *—PTI*

NCLT orders Tulip Hotels' liquidation after failed bids

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has mandated the liquidation of Tulip Hotels due to the absence of bidders during its insolvency resolution process. This decision follows a Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) initiated on 16 May 2023, after Yes Bank claimed a default of Rs 900 crore linked to corporate guarantees provided for two loans to Cox & Kings and EzeeGo One Travel and Tours Ltd. Despite the 180-day CIRP period concluding without any resolution plans submitted, the Committee of Creditors did not approve an extension. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Tripura exceeds 30,000 hectare rubber target

AGARTALA, 18 JAN

Tripura has exceeded its five-year rubber cultivation target of 30,000 hectares, achieving 47,747 hectares under the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA) initiative. The Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development (INROAD) programme, initiated in 2021, aims to develop 200,000 hectares of natural rubber plantation across Northeast India and West Bengal by the end of this year. Rubber Board Development Officer Arunabha Majumder highlighted that Tripura, already the second-largest rubber producer in India with a total of 110,648 hectares, is now targeting an expansion to 69,000 hectares. *—PTI*

Punjab & Sind Bank plans to raise ₹2,000 cr via QIP

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

State-owned Punjab and Sind Bank is set to raise Rs 2,000 crore through a Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) in the current quarter, as announced by managing director and CEO Swarup Kumar Saha. The bank has engaged merchant bankers and legal advisers for the initiative. Saha noted that this move will reduce the government's stake in the bank by 3-4 per cent and enhance its capital adequacy ratio by March 2025. The Indian government currently holds a 98.25 per cent stake, having extended the deadline for minimum public shareholding norms to August 2026 for certain public sector banks. Punjab and Sind Bank's board has approved a total capital raising plan of Rs 10,000 crore, including infrastructure bonds and Tier-1 or Tier-2 bonds. *—PTI*

Vinir Engineering submits IPO documents to SEBI

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Vinir Engineering Ltd has submitted preliminary documents to the capital markets regulator, SEBI, seeking approval for an initial public offering (IPO). The offering will consist entirely of an Offer-for-Sale (OFS) of up to 53.3 million equity shares, sold by promoter Nitesh Gupta, as detailed in the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Currently, the promoters hold 100 per cent of the company's stakes, and since this is an OFS, Vinir Engineering will not receive any proceeds from the IPO.

The primary objective of the offer is to benefit from listing its equity shares on stock exchanges. Vinir Engineering is a leading provider of integrated engineering solutions, manufacturing specialised, critical, and heavy precision-forged components across various industries, including energy and defence.

The firm operates three manufacturing units in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, with a total installed capacity of 38,000 MTPA. Pantomath Capital Advisors is the lead manager for the issue. *—PTI*

India hogs limelight ahead of WEF meet

India's delegation will include 5 Union Ministers, 3 CMs, 100 CEOs

DAVOS, 19 JAN

As the world prepares for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025, India's philosophy of 'unity in diversity' will be prominently showcased with a record delegation consisting of five union ministers, three chief ministers, and nearly 100 CEOs from various sectors. The gathering, starting on 20 January, will draw influential figures from government, civil society, and the arts.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, leading the Indian delegation, emphasised the international interest in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic strategy, India's digital transformation, and the advancements made under the Digital India initiative. Discussions will focus on inclusive growth, infrastructure investments, and the democratization of technology.

The gathering, starting on 20 January, will draw influential figures from government, civil society, and the arts **PHOTO: X**

Key figures joining Vaishnaw include Maharashtra's Devendra Fadnavis, Andhra Pradesh's N Chandrababu Naidu, and Telangana's A Revant Reddy. They will seek opportunities for investments, with Maharashtra targeting MoUs worth Rs 7 lakh crore during the event.

A recent World Economic Forum survey reveals expectations of a weaker global economy in 2025; however, India is anticipated to sustain strong growth amidst global uncertainty. The meeting will address various economic, geopolitical, and environmental challenges, identifying state-based armed conflict and misinformation as immediate risks. Prominent leaders participating will include US President-elect Donald Trump, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. A total of 3,000 leaders from over 130 countries, including 350 governmental leaders, will convene to discuss solutions for a rapidly evolving global economy.

Klaus Schwab, WEF Founder and Chairman, expressed optimism for cooperation as the forum explores pathways to sustainable and inclusive growth in the forthcoming Intelligent Age. *—PTI*

INFOSYS, TCS LAGGARDS

Mcap of 6 of 10 most valued firms erodes by ₹1.71L cr

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The combined market valuation of six out of the top ten valued domestic companies in India decreased by Rs 1.71 lakh crore last week, with significant losses observed in IT giants Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).

During the week, the BSE benchmark index fell by 759.58 points, equivalent to a 0.98 per cent decline, while the Nifty experienced a drop of 228.3 points or 0.97 per cent.

From the leading ten firms, TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, and ITC collectively witnessed a decline of Rs 1,71,680.42 crore in their market valuations. In contrast, Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India (SBI), and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) posted gains.

Infosys faced the largest decline, with its valuation plummeting by Rs 62,948.4 crore to Rs 7,53,678.38 crore after a nearly 6 per cent drop on Friday, primarily due to profit-taking following the release of its third-quarter earnings.

TCS's market capitalisation fell by Rs 50,598.95 crore to Rs 14,92,714.37 crore. Other companies including Hindustan Unilever and ICICI Bank also reported reductions in their valuations, down Rs 20,605.92 crore and Rs 16,005.84 crore, respectively.

On a positive note, Reliance Industries saw its valuation rise by Rs 79,773.34 crore to Rs 17,60,967.69 crore. SBI's market capitalisation increased by Rs 18,697.08 crore to Rs 6,81,930.22 crore, while LIC and Bharti Airtel added Rs 9,993.5 crore and Rs 7,080.98 crore, respectively.

Currently, Reliance Industries leads as the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, and others. *—PTI*

Adani Energy solutions' order book reaches ₹54,700 crore

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL), India's largest electricity transmission and distribution firm, has secured two significant transmission projects, boosting its order book to Rs 54,700 crore, more than three times the value at the start of the fiscal year in April 2024.

In the third quarter of FY25 (October-December 2024), AESL won two transmission projects worth Rs 28,455 crore in Rajasthan, linked to a renewable energy park. Among these projects is the Rs 25,000 crore Bhadla-Fatehpur HVDC project, marking AESL's largest order win to date. Following these successes, the company's market share in Tariff-Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) orders increased from 17 per cent to 24 per cent.

The current order book represents a substantial increase from Rs 17,000 crore at the beginning of the financial year, establishing AESL's leadership in the private transmission sector. During the quarter, the company commissioned a transmission line that expanded its network to over 1,000 circuit kilometres, now totalling 26,485 cKM and 84,286 MVA of transformation capacity. In distribution, AESL serves more than 3 million customers in the Mumbai metropolitan area and Mundra SEZ. Recent reports indicate a 3 per cent rise in power sales in Mumbai and a 30 per cent increase in Mundra. The firm has also applied for a parallel distribution license in Navi Mumbai, Kutch, and parts of Uttar Pradesh. Looking ahead, Jefferies projects a 16 per cent revenue CAGR and a 62 per cent profit CAGR for AESL through FY24-27, driven by sustained growth in both transmission and distribution sectors. *—PTI*

The current order book represents a substantial increase from Rs 17,000 crore at the beginning of the financial year **PHOTO: X**

DRIVEN BY STRONG DOLLAR

FPIs withdraw ₹44,396 cr from equities in January

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Foreign investors have withdrawn Rs 44,396 crore from Indian equities this month, driven by a strong dollar, rising US bond yields, and expectations of a lacklustre earnings season. This follows a more positive December, during which investors injected Rs 15,446 crore into the market, according to depository data.

The shift in sentiment arises amid both global and domestic challenges. Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director at Morningstar Investment Advisers India, noted that the continuing depreciation of the Indian rupee has significantly pressured foreign investors to divest from the equity markets. He pointed to high valuations of Indian equities, uncertainty over economic growth, and expected weak earnings as further deterrents for investors.

As of 17 January, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have sold shares on every day of the month except 2 January. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, explained that the strength of the dollar and rising US bond yields, currently above 4.6 per cent, have prompted FPIs to withdraw from emerging markets, particularly India, which is considered one of the most expensive.

PHOTO: X

FPIs have also withdrawn Rs 4,848 crore from the debt general limit and Rs 6,176 crore from the debt voluntary retention route. Despite this, analysts say a turnaround in FPI flows could occur with improved corporate earnings driven by government spending on infrastructure. Overall, the net increase in FPI inflows for 2024 stands at just Rs 427 crore, a stark contrast to the Rs 1.71 lakh crore observed in 2023. *—PTI*

Rupee likely to stabilise around ₹85-86 against USD

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The Indian rupee is projected to appreciate slightly and stabilise between 85 and 86 per US dollar in the coming weeks, driven by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) commitment to currency stability, according to Deloitte economist Rumki Majumdar. Following a dramatic decline last week which saw the rupee plummet to an all-time low of 86.70 due to substantial foreign fund outflows and a dip in domestic equities, analysts anticipate that it may no longer reach the 83-mark despite the RBI's interventions.

Rupee depreciated over 1 per cent this year after a nearly 3 per cent drop in 2022, fuelled by a robust US dollar and Foreign Institutional Investor withdrawals. Economist DK Srivastava said the upcoming Budget could consider increasing tariffs on imports to mitigate the rupee's decline. The anticipated recovery of the US economy is prompting capital to flow towards it, presenting challenges for Indian policymakers regarding fiscal and monetary strategies. *—PTI*

Domestic composite materials mkt to hit $2.8B

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

- The report highlights that India's per capita consumption of composite materials stands at a mere 0.55 kg, significantly lower

The domestic composite materials industry in India is projected to expand at an annual growth rate of 7.8 per cent, reaching USD 2.8 billion by 2030, as per a recent report by the FRP Institute. Currently valued at an estimated USD 1.8 billion in 2024, the Indian market for composite materials, including fibre-reinforced plastics (FRP), is viewed as a key player in supporting the circular economy by integrating multiple materials with varying properties.

The anticipated growth of the composite materials sector is driven by rising demand across several industries, including electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy, transportation, construction, consumer goods, and defence. Furthermore, government initiatives such as smart city projects, hydrocarbon transport, sewage treatment systems, and the rehabilitation of water and sewage pipelines are expected to bolster the consumption of these materials.

The report highlights that India's per capita consumption of composite materials stands at a mere 0.55 kg, significantly lower than in established markets such as the United States, which averages 11.5 kg, and Germany, with 7.7 kg.

To address this disparity and explore opportunities for enhancing the use of composite materials in the country, the FRP Institute, in collaboration with industry stakeholders, will host the 'International Conference and Exhibition on Reinforced Plastics (ICERP 2025)' from 21-23 January 2025 in Mumbai. *—PTI*

INDIA NOT SEEKING DUTY CUTS IN OMAN FTA

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

India is not seeking customs duty concessions on over 100 product categories, including liquor and cigarettes, in the ongoing negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) with Oman. While FTA discussions have concluded, Oman is requesting revisions to its market access offers on select products, with minimal potential changes anticipated.

India stands to gain significant market access for approximately 98 per cent of its goods in Oman, along with substantial access to the services sector.

Meanwhile, of the 125-130 tariff lines not requesting duty concessions, the petrochemical sector remains a key concern. *—PTI*

Space sector seeks ₹50,000 cr, tax holidays, more data usage

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Ahead of the Union Budget 2025-26 on 1 February , India's burgeoning space sector is urging the government to enhance investment in space-based services, reduce taxes to foster start-up growth, and introduce a production-linked incentive scheme tailored for the industry.

Valued at USD8.4 billion, the Indian space economy is witnessing increased participation from the private sector in satellite and launch system development. Awais Ahmed, co-founder and CEO of Pixxel Space, advocated for a production-linked incentive, emphasising the need for local manufacturing infrastructure. Indian Space Association Director Generalcalled for import exemptions, reduced GST, and temporary tax holidays to support the industry. He highlighted the potential for increased funding for space-based applications, such as satellite data use for toll collection by the Ministry of Road Transport.

Indian space economy is witnessing increased participation from the private sector in satellite and launch system development **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

Satcom Industry Association requested a budget increase of Rs 40,000-50,000 crore to bridge the funding gap with countries like Japan and China. The proposed budget should focus on advanced satellite technologies, space mining, and cyber capabilities for space security, as well as explore the establishment of a Space Economy Task Force within the Finance Ministry to align financial strategies with long-term growth objectives. *—PTI*

GLOBAL OIL PRICES IN FOCUS

Mkt driven by Q3 earnings, Trump 2.0 this week

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

The Indian equity markets in the upcoming week are set to be influenced by a mix of corporate earnings from bluechip companies and the inauguration of Donald Trump as the US President. Analysts are keenly observing how these developments will shape market performance.

Trump's second swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for 20 January, which is expected to have significant repercussions for global market sentiments.

Key firms within the Nifty-50 index, including HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Dr Reddy's, UltraTech Cement, and JSW Steel, will announce their financial results this week. As such, there is a focus on how these earnings will shape investor sentiment, especially in the context of ongoing competition between Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) and Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs).

"As the earnings season unfolds, anticipation around the upcoming Union Budget, which will define the government's economic strategies for the year, will heighten. Investors will be particularly attentive to policy measures, fiscal allocations, and initiatives likely to impact key sectors," remarked Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst at Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Experts highlight that the fluctuations in global oil prices and the rupee-dollar exchange rate will also play crucial roles in market behaviour. Siddhartha Khemka from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd noted that domestic equities are likely to experience volatility, driven by stock-specific actions correlating with quarterly earnings reports.

Last week saw the BSE benchmark drop significantly, with a decline of 759.58 points, or 0.98 per cent, while the Nifty fell by 228.3 points, or 0.97 per cent. Caution is advisable as the market navigates through these pivotal developments. *—PTI*

CapitaLand to invest ₹450 cr in Hyderabad IT park

HYDERABAD, 19 JAN

Singapore-based real estate investment and development firm CapitaLand Group has unveiled plans for a Rs 450 crore investment to create a cutting-edge IT park covering 1 million square feet in Hyderabad. The announcement followed a high-level meeting in Singapore involving Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu, state officials, and CapitaLand executives, including CEO & Executive Director Gauri Shankar Nagabhushanam.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy hailed the investment as a significant step in establishing Hyderabad as a prominent technology hub. Nagabhushanam expressed enthusiasm about expanding CapitaLand's presence , aiming to leverage the city's vibrant ecosystem for sustainable and world-class infrastructure. The firm already operates in International Tech Park Hyderabad, aVance Hyderabad, and CyberPearl. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

India's campaign at AFC Women's Futsal ends

YOGYAKARTA, 19 JAN

India dished out a vastly improved display before being edged out by Kyrgyzstan 3-4 in their concluding Group B tie of the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers on Sunday. Trailing 1-3 at half-time after taking the lead in the third minute through Drishti Pant, the Indian girls wreaked havoc in the rival defence in the final five minutes to make it 3-3, thanks to two dazzling strikes by deceptive attacker Khushbu Saroj (34', 40'). Yet, the pleasure of taking at least a point home remained unfulfilled as the goal by Nazik Kumyshbek Kyzy, with less than 25 seconds remaining, saw Kyrgyzstan have the last laugh. The winners scored the other goals through Aizhan Boronbekova (10'), Nursuluu Murzakulova (12'), and Rebecca Zamthianmawi (OG, 18'). It was Kyrgyzstan's first victory in the group after losing against hosts Indonesia and Hong Kong. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Jadeja to play Ranji Trophy tie against Delhi

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is set to play in Saurashtra's Ranji Trophy tie against Delhi from January 23 after turning up for the team's practice session in Rajkot on Sunday. Jadeja last played for Saurashtra in January 2023. Following the tour of Australia, the BCCI made participation in domestic cricket mandatory unless the player is unavailable due to an injury. "Jadeja has turned up for training today. He will play the next match," Saurashtra Cricket Association president Jaydev Shah told PTI on Sunday.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Rafter replaces McEnroe as Laver vice-captain

MELBOURNE, 19 JAN

Two-time US Open champion Pat Rafter will take over for Patrick McEnroe as vice-captain of Team World for the 2025 Laver Cup. The appointment was confirmed Sunday at a news conference during the Australian Open and will see Rafter support captain Andre Agassi at the event in San Francisco in September. "It's an honor to take on this role," said former No. 1-ranked Rafter, an Australian who won successive US Opens in 1997-98 and was also a Wimbledon finalist. "The Laver Cup is a phenomenal event, and being part of something that honors Rod Laver and past generations of tennis is very special to me."—*PTI*

Tatiana saves six match points to emerge champion

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Tatiana Prozorova saved six match points to bag the singles title at the ITF W50 tournament, edging past second seed Panna Udvardy in a marathon final here on Sunday. Seventh seed Prozorova saved three match points in the 12th game of the second set and then three more in the tiebreaker to force a decider and finally prevailed 4-6 7-6(6) 6-4 in the three-hour-long final that was littered with breaks and unforced errors from the two players."I am really happy that I could win this match and save so many points and also didn't miss my chance. I am really happy to win my first title this year.—*PTI*

SKY could have been X-factor in CT: Raina

Siraj can be back in the side if Bumrah is not fully fit

NEW DELHI, 19 JAN

Former India all-rounder Suresh Raina feels middle-order batter Suryakumar Yadav will be sorely missed in the upcoming Champions Trophy as he could have provided the 'X-factor' in Dubai, where Rohit Sharma's side will play all its games.

Suryakumar and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj were the two big names missing from the Champions Trophy squad announced on Saturday. They are among a total of six players who featured in the 2023 ODI World Cup squad.

The others to miss out are Prasidh Krishna, Shardul Thakur, and Ishan Kishan, while Ravichandran Ashwin has recently retired from the game. "Surya was an integral part of the World Cup squad, a 360 player who can score at 9 runs per over at any stage of the game. He can dominate the opposition and bats differently," Raina said on Star Sports Press Room.

"If Surya were there there would have been an X-factor, he will be missed. The responsibility will now be on the top 3 who are not in form. Surya is someone who can bat in any position." Raina also said with uncertainty looming large over Jasprit Bumrah's fitness and Mohammed Shami returning from an injury, Siraj would have been a better option. However, he still feels, the Hyderabad pacer can still make it to the squad.

"Siraj was in a different form in Australia but you can change the squad till 12 February. So I feel Siraj can be back in the side if Bumrah is not fully fit," he said."Harshit Rana has done well. He has good pace, good bumper, variation, yorker and pace. He and both Arshdeep Singh can bowl at the death but I still feel, Siraj is a better option if Bumrah is not there." —*PTI*

Suryakumar and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj were the two big names missing from the Champions Trophy squad announced on Saturday. They are among a total of six players who featured in the 2023 ODI World Cup squad.

Suryakumar Yadav PHOTO: PTI

Jaiswal's inclusion a 'concern'

23-year-old opener Yashasvi Jaiswal was included in India's squad for the Champions Trophy 2025, despite having not yet made his debut in ODI cricket. However, despite amassing 1,771 runs in international cricket across Tests and T20Is in 2024, Jaiswal may not feature in the playing XI for the Champions Trophy, with captain Rohit Sharma and vice-captain Shubman Gill set to open the batting. Speaking on the topic, 2011 World Cup winner Suresh Raina also echoed the sentiment, leaving out Jaiswal as an opener. "It is a valid question.

IST TEST : WEST INDIES VS PAK

Sajid, Abrar spin Pakistan to 127-run win over West Indies in first Test PHOTO: @PCB

Pakistan seal 127 run win over West Indies

MULTAN, 19 JAN

Sajid Khan and Noman Ali starred with the ball, dismantling the West Indies batting line-up across both innings.

Sajid's four-wicket haul on the third day, combined with Noman's first-innings five-for, ensured Pakistan maintained control throughout the match. Abrar Ahmed sealed the win by taking the final wicket on Sunday.

Set a target of 251 after dismissing Pakistan for 157 earlier in the day, the West Indies faltered against the spin trio. Sajid tore through the top order, claiming figures of 4-36, while Noman picked up 3-50, leaving the visitors reeling.

Abrar Ahmed chipped in with two crucial wickets, including the final dismissal of Jayden Seales, as the West Indies were bowled out for a mere 137.

Earlier in the day, Warrican's career-best figures of 7-32 in 18 overs had given the West Indies hope. He ran through Pakistan's second innings after the hosts resumed on 109-3.

Despite Warrican's efforts, Pakistan's first-innings lead of 93 runs proved decisive.

The series is the West Indies' first Test tour of Pakistan since 2006, with the visitors currently sitting at the bottom of the Championship table.

Pakistan 230 (Shakeel 84, Rizwan 71, Seales 3-27) and 157 (Masood 52, Warrican 7-32) beat West Indies 137 (Warrican 31*, Noman 5-39, Sajid 4-65) and 123 (Athanaze 55, Sajid 5-50, Abrar 4-27) by 127 runs —*PTI*

Indian bowlers shot a clueless West Indies batter out for a measly 44 PHOTO: @BCCIWOMEN/X

India begins women's U-19 WC title defence with a win

KUALA LUMPUR, 19 JAN

Indian bowlers shot a clueless West Indies batter out for a measly 44 to set up a commanding nine-wicket win to begin their title defense on a resounding note in the women's U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

Left-arm spinners Parunika Sisodia (3/7) and Aayushi Shukla (2/6), as well as pacer VJ Joshitha (2/6), toyed with the West Indies batters to bowl the Caribbeans out in just 13.2 overs in the Group A match at Bayuemas Oval.

Kenika Cassar top-scored for the West Indies with a 29-ball 15 while opener Asabi Callender contributed 12. All the other West Indies batters could score in single-digit figures with five of them getting out without opening an account.

India chased down the target of 45 in just 4.2 overs, reaching 47 for 1 with opener Trisha G getting out for 4 on the second ball off Jahzara Claxton.

Wicketkeeper-batter G Kamalini (16 not out off 13 balls) and Sanika Chalke (18 not out off 11 balls) took India home for an easy win.

India play hosts Malaysia in their next group match here on Tuesday. Sri Lanka is the other team in Group A.

The top three teams from each of the four groups will progress to the Super Six stage, with the three teams from Group A and Group D combining to form one Super Six group and similarly with the top three teams of Group B and Group C in the other group.

Brief Scores: West Indies U-19 Women: 44 in 13.2 overs (Kenika Cassar 15; Parunika Sisodia 3/7, Aayushi Shukla 2/6, VJ Joshitha 2/6). India U-19 Women: 47 for 1 in 4.2 overs (Sanika Chalke 18 not out, G Kamalini 16 not out; Jahzara Claxton 1/18). —*PTI*

Djokovic sets up blockbuster match with Alcaraz

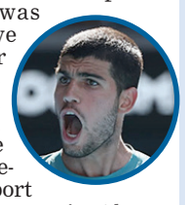
MELBOURNE, 19 JAN

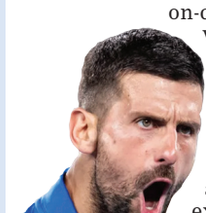
Novak Djokovic set up a mouth-watering quarter-final against Carlos Alcaraz at the Australian Open with a convincing victory over Jiri Lehecka.

Djokovic continued his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title with a 6-3 6-4 7-6 (7-4) win against the Czech 24th seed.

He will face Alcaraz in the last eight after the Spaniard progressed when British number one Jack Draper retired with a hip injury earlier on Sunday. Alcaraz beat Djokovic in the past two Wimbledon finals, but the Serb got the better of the 21-year-old to win gold at the Paris Olympics last summer Djokovic's self-proclaimed "biggest sporting achievement". Djokovic was booed by the crowd as Lehecka threatened to force a fourth set, and the 11-time Australian Open champion was quick to leave Rod Laver Arena after his victory. "Thank you very much for being here tonight, I appreciate your support and I will see you in the next round," was all the 37-year-old said as he swerved the usual on-court interview.

During his third-round win over Tomas Machac, Djokovic appeared exhausted at times and needed a medical timeout. He looked fresher against Machac's compatriot, taking control of the opening two sets. —*PTI*



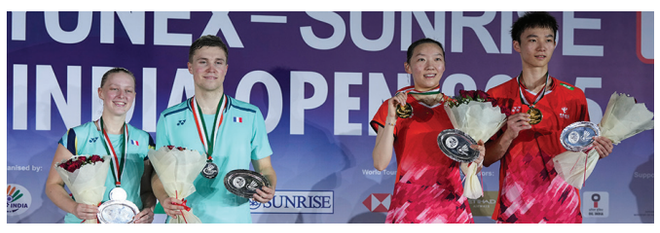


Bopanna-Zhang storm into mixed doubles Q/Fs

The mixed doubles pair of Rohan Bopanna (India) and Zhang Shuai (China) advanced to the quarter-finals of the ongoing Australian Open 2025 after receiving a walkover against fourth seeds Taylor Townsend (USA) and Hugo Nys (Monaco) in the second round on Sunday. Zhang Shuai, a two-time Grand Slam champion and former world No. 2, teamed up with Rohan Bopanna to reach the final eight. The Indo-Chinese pair will face the winners of the match between Australia's Olivia Gadecki and John Peers and Hungary's Timea Babos with El Salvador's Marcelo Arevalo. In the first round, Bopanna and Zhang defeated France's Kristina Mladenovic and Croatia's Ivan Dodig 6-4, 6-4 at the season's first tennis Grand Slam. —*PTI*

Gauff, Sabalenka into quarters

While Coco Gauff's consecutive-set winning streak ended at the Australian Open, her bid for a second Grand Slam title continued Sunday with a 5-7, 6-2, 6-1 comeback victory over Belinda Bencic in the fourth round. Gauff, a 20-year-old from Florida who won the 2023 US Open as a teenager, had collected all 16 sets she had played this year and 24 of her past 25 dating to the end of last season, which included a title at the WTA Finals. But the tournament's No. 3 seed was unable to control her shots well enough at the start against Bencic on a steamy early afternoon in Rod Laver Arena. —*PTI*



China's Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin, in red, and France's Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue pose for pictures during the felicitation ceremony after finishing as winners and runner-up respectively, of the Mixed Doubles final match at the India Open 2025 badminton tournament PHOTO: PTI

Players are to travel by team bus: BCCI

KOLKATA, 19 JAN

The implementation of the 10-point policy guidelines for the Indian cricket team has begun with the BCCI communicating to the Cricket Association of Bengal that no separate vehicle should be arranged for any player as all are required to travel by the team bus. The Indian team is in Kolkata for the T20I series opener against England at Eden Gardens on 22 January.

After the Australia series debacle, the BCCI has come out with a 10-point SOP.

As per the SOP, "all players are required to stay for the entire duration of scheduled practice sessions and travel together to and from the venue. —*PTI*

Messi scores for Inter in pre-season victory

PARIS, 19 JAN

Lionel Messi got on the scoresheet Saturday as Inter Miami opened their pre-season campaign with a penalty shoot-out victory over Mexico's Club America in Las Vegas. Argentinian superstar Messi headed home a Luis Suarez cross from close range after 34 minutes to equalize for the Major League Soccer side after America had taken the lead through Henry Martin moments earlier. Israel Reyes fired America back in front in the 52nd minute at the Allegiant Stadium to make it 2-1.

New Miami coach Javier Mascherano removed Messi from the field on 66 minutes in a flurry of second-half substitutions.

America appeared poised for victory but Tomas Aviles nodded home an equalizer two minutes into stoppage time after a superb inswinging corner from Julian Gressel.

That sent the friendly to a penalty shoot-out, won 3-2 by Miami in sudden death. —*PTI*

Messi's goal was his first under new manager Javier Mascherano PHOTO: @LEOMESSI

I-LEAGUE 2024-25

Cezar's brace seals win for Kashmir against B'luru

BENGALURU, 19 JAN

Paulo Cezar scored a brace to help Real Kashmir FC return to winning ways in the I-League 2024-25 as they thrashed a 9-man SC Bengaluru 3-1 at the TRC Football Turf, here, on Sunday.

After Brazilian Cezar (28', 55') put the home side 2-0 ahead, Senegalese Abdou Karim hit the other goal for the hosts from the spot after SC Bengaluru goalkeeper Bishal Lama brought the Senegalese down inside the box and received a red card. All three of Real Kashmir's wins have come on their home ground.

Ugandan Henry Kisseka netted a consolation goal for SC Bengaluru in the last minute of the match. SC Bengaluru captain Carlos Lomba was also sent off in the added minutes of the match.

The win helped Real Kashmir climb to the sixth spot in the standings. The Ishfaque Ahmed-coached side has 13 points from nine games with three wins, four draws and two losses.

It was yet another frustrating afternoon for I-League newbies SC Bengaluru. The bottom-placed side, who have five points from nine matches, have struggled incessantly in the tournament and have now gone winless in five matches. Determined to end a six-game winless streak dating back to December 4, 2024, Real Kashmir showed a positive intent and the right purpose from the outset.

They broke the deadlock in the 28th minute when a Lalramsanga cross from the left was headed home by Cezar. —*PTI*

Real Kashmir FC thrashed a 9-man SC Bengaluru 3-1 PHOTO: PTI

India defender Pritam Kotal joins Chennaiyin FC

CHENNAI, 19 JAN

India defender Pritam Kotal on Sunday joined Indian Super League (ISL) side Chennaiyin FC, leaving Kerala Blasters FC on a two-and-a-half-year deal.

The 31-year-old Kotal, who has more than 50 caps for India has been a regular feature in the ISL for the last decade. Kotal began his youth career with Chirag United before moving to the I-League and eventually to ISL. The West Bengal player has captained Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the past, leading them to eight consecutive wins in the Kolkata derby. He has also been a member of the ISL winning sides in 2016 and 2019-20.

The move will strengthen the defence line of the Marina Machans. With the Indian team, Kotal won the 2016 South Asian Football Championship and was also a member of the sides that won the 2018 Intercontinental Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. He received the AIFF Player of the Year award in 2015.

"The coach explained he wanted me on his team, so when I got the offer, I had no doubts about joining. This is a very good team that plays well. My goal from hereon would be to try and win every match and go to the playoffs," Kotal said. —*PTI*